

S E R M O N S

O N S E V E R A L

SUBJECTS *and* OCCASIONS,

By the most Reverend

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L A T E

Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*.

V O L U M E *the* N I N T H.



L O N D O N:

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S E R M O N CLVII.

God the first cause, and last end.

ROM. xi. 36.

For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

HAVING considered the more eminent and S E R M.
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The dependance of these words upon the former is briefly this. The apostle had been speaking before in this chapter, several things that might tend to raise us to an admiration of the wisdom, and goodness, and mercy of God, in the dispensation of his grace, for the salvation of men, both Jews and Gentiles, and therefore would have us ascribe this work wholly to God; the contrivance of it to his wisdom, and not to our own counsels, v. 34. "For who hath known the mind of the LORD? and who hath been his counsellor?" and the bestowing this grace, to his free goodness and mercy, and not to any desert of ours, v. 35. "Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to

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“him again?” Yea and not only in the dispensation of grace, but of all good things; not only in this work of redemption, but also of creation, GOD is the fountain, and original, and first cause, from whence every thing proceeds; and the last end, to which every thing is to be referred. “For of him,” &c. ἐξ αὐτοῦ, “from him,” the efficient cause producing all things; δι’ αὐτοῦ, “by or through him,” as the efficient conserving cause of all things; καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν, “and to him,” as the final cause of all things, and the end for which they were made.

The proposition I shall speak to is, that GOD is the first cause, and last end.

First, I shall a little explain the terms.

Secondly, confirm the proposition.

Thirdly, apply it.

First, for the explication of the terms.

I. That GOD is the first cause, signifies,

1. Negatively, that he had no cause, did not derive his being from any other, or does depend upon any other being; but that he was always, and eternally of himself.

2. Positively, that he is the cause of all things besides himself, the fountain and original of all created beings, from whom all things proceed, and upon whom all things depend; or, that I may use the expression of St. John, John i. 3. which I know is appropriated to the second person in the Trinity, “By him all things were made, and without him “was nothing made that was made.” So that when we attribute to GOD, that he is the first, we mean, that there was nothing before him, and that he was before all things, and that all things are by him.

II. The last end, that is, that all things refer to him; that is, the design and aim of all things that

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are made, is the illustration of God's glory some way or other, and the manifestation of his perfections.

Secondly, for the confirmation, I shall briefly, according to my usual method, attempt it these two ways.

I. By natural light. The notion of a God contains in it all possible perfection. Now the utmost perfection we can imagine, is, for a being to be always of itself, before all other beings, and not only so, but to be the cause of all other beings; that is, that there should be nothing, but what derives it's being from him, and continually depends upon him; from whence follows, that all things must refer to him, as their last end. For every wise agent acts with design, and in order to an end. Now the end is that which is best, which is most worthy the attaining, and that is God himself. Now his being and perfections are already, and the best next to the existence of his being and perfections, is the manifestation of them, which is called God's glory; and this is the highest end that we can imagine, to which all the effects of the divine power, and goodness, and wisdom, do refer.

And that these titles are to be attributed to God, is not only reasonable, when it is revealed and discovered, but was discovered by the natural light of the heathens. Hence it was that Aristotle gave to God those titles of the first being, the first cause, and the first mover; and his master Plato calls God "the author, and parent of all things, the maker " and architect of the world, and of all creatures; " the fountain and original of all things." Porphyry calls him τὸ πρῶτον, the first, from whence he reasons to this sense, that " he is the ultimate end, " and that all things move towards God, that all " motions

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“ motions center in him ; because, saith he, it is most proper and natural for things to refer to their original, and to refer all to him, from whom they receive all.” Antoninus, the emperor and philosopher, speaking of nature (which with the Stoicks signifies God) hath these words, which are so very like these of the apostle, that they may seem to be taken from him ; *ἐκ σὲ πάντα, ἐν σοὶ πάντα, εἰς σὲ πάντα*, “ Of thee are all things, in thee are all things, to thee are all things.”

II. From scripture. Hither belong all those places where he declares himself to be “ the first, and the last,” Isa. xli. 4. “ Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning ? I the LORD, the first, and with the last, I am he.” Isa. xliii. 10. “ Before me there was no God formed,” (or as it is in the margin) “ there was nothing formed of God, neither shall there be after me.” Isa. xliv. 6. “ I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God.” Isa. xlviii. 12, 13. “ I am the first, I am also the last, my hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, my right hand hath spread the heavens ;” which is as much as to say, he hath made the world, and was the first cause of all things. Rev. i. 8. “ I am alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, saith the LORD, which is, and which was, and which is to come.”

But more expressly, 1 Cor. viii. 6. “ But to us there is but one God, the father, of whom are all things, and we by him, *καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτόν*, and we to him, and for him.” Acts xvii. 24. “ God that made the world, and all things therein.” V. 25. “ He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.” V. 28. “ In him we live, and move, and
“ and

“ and have our being.” V. 29. “ For as much then
“ as we are the off-spring of God.”

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Hither we may refer those texts which attribute the same to the second person in the Trinity, as the eternal wisdom and word of God, whereby all things were made, John. i. 3. “ All things were made by him, and without him was nothing made, that was made.” V. 10. “ And the world was made by him.” 1 Cor. viii. 6. “ And one LORD JESUS CHRIST, by whom are all things, and we by him.” Eph. iii. 9. “ GOD, who created all things by JESUS CHRIST.” Col. i. 16. “ By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” Heb. i. 2. “ By whom also he made the worlds.” And, v. 3. “ Upholding all things by the word of his power.”

Thirdly and lastly, to apply this doctrine.

Use. First, if GOD be the first cause of all things, who did at first produce all creatures, and does since preserve them and govern them, and disposeth of all their concernments, and orders all things that befall them, from hence let us learn,

1. With humility and thankfulness to own, and acknowledge, and admire and bless GOD as the author and original of our being, as the spring and fountain of all the blessings and good things that we enjoy. If we do but consider what these words signify, that GOD is the first cause of all things, we shall see great reason to own and acknowledge, to adore and praise him, and that with the greatest humility; because we have not given him any thing,
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but have received all from him ; he is the cause of all things, who did freely and of his own good will and pleasure communicate being to us, without any constraint or necessity, but what his own goodness laid upon him, Rev. iv. 11. " Thou art worthy, O LORD, to receive glory, and honour, and power ; " for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." We could not, before we were, deserve any thing from him, or move him by any argument, or importune him by intreaties to make us ; but he freely gave us being ; and ever since we depend upon him, and have been preserved by him, and cannot subsist one moment without the continued influence of the power and goodness which first called us out of nothing. He is the author of all the good, and the fountain of all those blessings, which for the present we enjoy, and for the future hope for.

When he made us at first, he designed us for happiness ; and when we by our sin and wilful miscarriage fell short of the happiness which he designed us for, he sent his son into the world for our recovery, and gave his life for the ransom of our souls. He hath not only admitted us into a new covenant, wherein he hath promised pardon, and eternal life to us ; but he hath also purchased these blessings for us, by the most endearing price, the blood of his own son, and hath saved us in such a manner as may justly astonish us. Upon these considerations we should awaken ourselves to the praise of God, and with the holy Psalmist, call up our spirits, and summon all the powers and faculties of our souls to assist us in this work, Psal. ciii. 1, 2, 3, 4, &c. " Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, " bless his holy name ; bless the LORD, O my soul, and

“ and forget not all his benefits ; who forgiveth all
“ thy iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who
“ redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crown-
“ eth thee with loving kindness and tender mer-
“ cies ;” it is he that “ satisfies our souls with good
“ things,” that hath promised eternal life and hap-
piness to us, and must confer and bestow this upon
us ; “ Therefore our souls, and all that is within
“ us,” should “ bless his holy name.”

2. If God be the first cause, that is, orders all things that befall us, and by his providence disposeth of all our concerns, this should teach us with patience and quietness to submit to all events, to all evils and afflictions, that come upon us, as being disposed by his wise providence, and coming from him ; we are apt to attribute all things to the next and immediate agent, and to look no higher than second causes ; not considering that all the motions of natural causes are directly subordinate to the first cause, and all the actions of free creatures are under the government of God’s wise providence ; so that nothing happens to us besides the designs and intention of God.

And methinks this is one particular excellency of the style of the scripture above all other books, that the constant phrase of the sacred dialect is to attribute all events (excepting sins only) to God ; so that every one that reads it cannot but take notice, that it is wrote with a more attentive consideration of God than any other book, as appears by those frequent and express acknowledgments of God as the cause of all events ; so that what in other writers would be said to be done by this or that person, is ascribed to God. Therefore it is so often said, that

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the LORD did this and that, stirred up such an enemy, brought such a judgment. And we shall find that holy men in scripture make excellent use of this consideration, to argue themselves into patience and contentedness in every condition. So Eli, 1 Sam. iii. 18. "It is the LORD, let him do what seemeth him good." So Job, he did not so consider the Sabeans and Chaldeans, who had carried away his oxen and his camels, and slain his servants; nor the wind which had thrown down his house, and killed his sons and his daughters; but he looks up to GOD, the great governor and disposer of all these events; "The LORD giveth, and the LORD hath taken away, blessed be the name of the LORD." So David, Psal. xxxvi. 9. "I was dumb, and spake not a word, because thou LORD didst it." So our blessed SAVIOUR, when he was ready to suffer, he did not consider the malice of the Jews, which was the cause of his death, but looks to a higher hand; "the cup which my father gives me to drink, shall not I drink it?"

He that looks upon all things as coming from second causes, and does not eye the first cause, the good and wise governor, will be apt to take offence at every cross and unwelcome accident. Men are apt to be angry, when one flings water upon them as they pass in the streets; but no man is offended if he is wet by rain from heaven. When we look upon evils as coming only from men, we are apt to be impatient, and know not how to bear them; but we should look upon all things as under the government and disposal of the first cause, and the circumstances of every condition as allotted to us by the wise providence of GOD; this consideration,
that

that it is the hand of God, and that he hath done it, would still all the murmurings of our spirits. As when a seditious multitude is in an uproar, the presence of a grave and venerable person will hush the noise, and quell the tumult; so if we would but represent God as present to all actions, and governing and disposing all events, this would still and appease our spirits, when they are ready to riot and mutiny against any of his dispensations.

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Use the second. If God be the last end of all, let us make him our last end, and refer all our actions to his glory. This is that which is due to him, as he is the first cause, and therefore he does most reasonably require it of us.

And herein likewise the scripture doth excel all other books, that is, doth more frequently and expressly mind us of this end, and calls upon us to propose it to ourselves as our ultimate aim and design. We should love him as our chief end, Matth. xxii. 37. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Thus to love God is that which, in the language of the schools, is loving God as our chief end. So likewise the apostle requires, that we should refer all the actions of our lives to this end, 1 Cor. x. 31. "Whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God;" that we should glorify him in our souls, and in our bodies, which are his." He is the author of all the powers that we have, and therefore we should use them for him; we do all by him, and therefore we should do all to him.

And that we may the better understand ourselves as to this duty, I shall endeavour to give satisfaction to a question or two which may arise about it.

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And that we may the better understand ourselves as to this duty, I shall endeavour to give satisfaction to a question or two which may arise about it.

First, whether an actual intention of God's glory be necessary to make every action that we do good and acceptable to God?

Ans. 1. It is necessary that the glory of God, either formally or virtually, should be the ultimate end and scope of our lives, and all our actions; otherwise they will be defective in that which in moral actions is most considerable, and that is the end. If a man should keep all the commandments of the gospel, this excepted, of making God's glory his supreme end, only with a design to gain reputation, or some other advantage in the world, this very thing would vitiate all, and render him unacceptable to God.

2. It is very requisite and convenient, as a good sign, that we should very frequently, actually think upon, and intend this end; for if it be very much out of our thoughts, we have reason to be jealous of ourselves, that we do not intend it at all.

3. It is so far from being necessary, that we should in every action have this intention of God's glory, that it is not morally possible that we should, no more than it is possible, that a man that goes a journey of a thousand miles, should every step he takes have actual thoughts of his journey's end, nor is it more necessary; for consideration of the end is only so far necessary, as it is necessary to guide and quicken us in the use of means; as it is not necessary for a man to think of his journey's end, farther than to direct and excite him to go thither. And this appears farther by the contrary; it is not necessary to make a sinful action, that a man should formally, much less actually intend God's dishonour; it is enough to constitute a man a wicked man, if he willingly transgress God's law, the doing whereof

does by consequence reflect a dishonour upon him : so, on the other hand, it is sufficient to make an action good and acceptable, if it be conformable to God's law, and such as by consequence redounds to God's glory.

Second question. Whether the glory of God may, or ought to be considered, as an end separate and distinct from our own happiness ?

Ans. I shall speak but briefly to this, because I have elsewhere spoken to it ; but in that little which I have to say for satisfaction to this question, I will proceed by these steps.

I. By the glory of God, we mean the demonstration, or illustration, or manifestation of some or of all his perfections, more especially his goodness, and mercy, and justice, and wisdom, and power, and holiness.

II. It is plain, that the manifestation of some of these perfections is a thing that may be separated from the happiness of a creature ; for his holiness, and justice, and power, may and shall be manifested in the final and eternal ruin of impenitent sinners.

III. The manifestation of any of God's perfections, ought many times to be propounded by us as an end distinct and separate from our respective happiness ; such a happiness, as respects only some particulars, and some particular duration, in opposition to absolute and eternal happiness. In this sense our SAVIOUR says, that he " sought not his own glory, " but the glory of him that sent him : " by which he does not mean, that he quitted everlasting glory and happiness ; but that, in order to the glory of God, he did for a time lay aside his own glory, and divest himself of it while he was in this world ; for the apostle tells us, that he was encouraged to do this

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this out of a respect to a greater glory, Heb. xii. 2. "Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." And in this sense we are to understand the command of self-denial in the gospel, with reference to our particular or temporal, not our eternal interest; and that it is no more, is plain from the argument our SAVIOUR uses to encourage this self-denial, the promise of a far greater happiness than that we deny; no man that "forakes father or mother for my sake," but shall "have eternal life:" And proportionably we are to understand those commands of loving CHRIST more than ourselves, that is, more than any temporal interest.

IV. The manifestation of any of GOD's perfections, neither ought, nor can reasonably be propounded by us, as an end separated from, or opposite to our eternal blessedness; that is, we cannot naturally or reasonably desire the glory of GOD should be advanced, though it were to our final ruin, either by annihilation, or eternal misery.

I. We cannot either naturally or reasonably desire GOD should be glorified by our annihilation.

(1.) Not naturally. Because such a desire would be directly contrary to the natural desire of self-preservation, which GOD himself hath planted in us, and is most intimate and essential to our nature.

(2.) Not reasonably. Because it is utterly unimaginable how GOD can be glorified by the annihilation of a creature. All the attributes that we can imagine can be manifested herein, are power and sovereignty; his power hath already been as much manifested in creating and making the creature out of nothing, as it can be by reducing it into nothing;

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for to create is the very same demonstration of power as to annihilate. And as for his sovereignty, God will never manifest that in contradiction to his goodness, or wisdom, or any other perfection of the divine nature. To unmake a creature, and to take away the being which he had given, would argue either a failure of his goodness toward the creature, or that he did repent he had made it, which would reflect upon his wisdom and constancy. I do not say, that in justice God cannot annihilate a creature; far be it from me: for what he gave was his own, and he may without any wrong to the creature take it again.

2. Much less can we naturally desire that God should be glorified in our eternal misery. The reasons which I gave about annihilation are stronger here; therefore we cannot naturally desire it, nor reasonably, for the demonstration of his power, or sovereignty, or justice, or holiness, which I think are all the attributes which we can imagine to be glorified hereby: not as the manifestation of his power; for that would be as much manifested in the happiness, as misery of the creature: not of his sovereignty; for God will not manifest that in contradiction to his goodness, upon which nothing can reflect more, than merely, *pro arbitrio*, for his pleasure, to make an innocent creature for ever miserable: Not his justice, and holiness; for these presuppose sin and demerit in the creature, out of hatred to which he makes it miserable; but God hath declared that he esteems himself more glorified by the obedience and happiness of his creatures, than by their sin and destruction; and if it were reasonable to desire the justice and holiness of God might be glorified in my eternal ruin, which I have deserved

ed by sin; this would plainly follow from it, that it were reasonable "to sin, that justice might abound," which of the two is a greater absurdity than that which the apostle condemns, of "sinning, that " grace may abound."

V. There is a strict and inviolable connexion between the greatest glory of God, and our obedience and happiness: I say, between his greatest glory; because he esteems himself more glorified by the obedience and happiness of his creatures, than by their ruin and misery; and that we may believe it, we have his oath for it; "As I live, saith the LORD, " I delight not in the death of a sinner, but rather " that he should turn, and live." And it is observable, that the apostle, in 1 Cor. x. 31, 32, 33. "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, " do all to the glory of God; giving none offence, " neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to " the church of God; even as I please all men " in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but " the profit of many, that they may be saved," explains the glorifying of God, by edifying and promoting the salvation of others.

VI. We may consider the glory of God as some ways distinct from our happiness; that is, we may consider the manifestation of his goodness, and mercy, and wisdom, in our happiness, as that which results from it; but this is not enough to make it a distinct end, but the same diversly considered; as the publick good is that which results from the general good of particular persons, but cannot reasonably be propounded by any man, as an end distinct from the general happiness of particular persons, without ruining and destroying the notion of publick good.

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VII. Though considered as we are particular beings, we can have no greater end than our own happiness, in which God is eminently glorified ; yet as we are part of the whole creation and workmanship of God, which is the noblest consideration of ourselves, the glory of God, which results from the manifestation of all his perfections in and about his creatures, is precisely our ultimate end, and yet not an end really distinct from our own happiness ; and therefore it is most proper, and becoming, and agreeable to the wise stile of scripture, to give our end it's denomination, not from the more particular and narrow, but the more noble consideration of ourselves, as we are parts of the whole creation and workmanship of God ; as it is more generous and becoming for the members of a civil society to mention the publick good as their end, than their private happiness and advantage, though that be so really and effectually promoted by the publick good.

Thus I have finished what I proposed on this argument, and concerning the attributes of God in general ; " Of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. To him be glory for ever." Amen.

S E R M O N CLVIII.

Of doing good.

G A L A T. vi. 9, 10.

Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not: as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

S E R M.
CLVIII.

A Spital
Sermon,
preached
at Christ-
Church-
on Easter-
Tuesday,
April 14.
1691.

TH E apostle in these words recommends unto us a great and comprehensive duty, “the doing of good;” concerning which the text offers these five particulars to our consideration.

I. The nature of the duty itself, which is called “well-doing,” v. 9. and “doing good,” v. 10.

II. The extent of this duty, in respect of it’s object, which is all mankind, “Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

III. The measure of it, “as we have opportunity.”

IV. Our unwearied perseverance in it; “let us not be weary in well-doing.”

V. The argument and encouragement to it; because “in due season we shall reap, if we faint not: Therefore as we have opportunity, let us do good, &c.”

I. I will consider the nature of the duty itself; of “well-doing,” and “doing good.” And this I shall explain to you as briefly as I can, by considering the extent of the act of doing good, and the excellency of it. And,

1. The extent of the act. It comprehends in it all

all those ways wherein we may be beneficial and useful to one another. It reaches not only to the bodies of men, but to their souls, that better and more excellent part of ourselves; and is conversant in all those ways and kinds, whereby we may serve the temporal, or spiritual good of our neighbour, and promote either his present, or his future and eternal happiness.

To instruct the ignorant, or reduce those that are in error; "to turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just," and reclaim those that are engaged in any evil course, by good counsel, and seasonable admonition, and by prudent and kind reproof; to resolve and satisfy the doubting mind; to confirm the weak; to heal the broken-hearted, and to comfort the melancholy and troubled spirits: These are the noblest ways of charity, because they are conversant about the souls of men, and tend to procure and promote their eternal felicity.

And then "to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, release the imprisoned;" to redeem the captives, and to vindicate those who are injured and oppressed in their persons, or estates, or reputation; to repair those who are ruined in their fortunes; and, in a word, to relieve and comfort those who are in any kind of calamity or distress.

All these are but the several branches and instances of this great duty here in the text, of "doing good;" though it hath, in this place, a more particular respect to the charitable supply of those, who are in want and necessity; and therefore with a more particular regard to that, I shall discourse of it at this time. You see the extent of the duty. We will, in the

2d place, briefly say something of the excellency
18 P 2 of

of it, which will appear, if we consider, that it is the imitation of the highest excellency and perfection. To do good, is to be like God, who "is good, "and doth good;" and it is to be like him, in that which he esteems his greatest glory. It is to be like the Son of God, who, when he was pleased to take our nature upon him, and live here below, and to dwell amongst us, "went about doing good." And it is to be like the blessed angels, the highest rank and order of God's creatures; whose great employment it is to be ministering spirits, for the good of men. So that for a man to be kind, and helpful, and beneficial to others, is to be a good angel, and a saviour, and a kind of god too.

It is an argument of a great, and noble, and generous mind, to excite our thoughts and cares to the concernments of others, and to employ our interest, and power, and endeavours for their benefit and advantage: whereas a low, and mean, and narrow spirit, is contracted and shriveled up within itself, and cares only for it's own things, without any regard to the good and happiness of others.

It is the most noble work in the world, because that inclination of mind, which prompts us to do good, is the very temper and disposition of happiness. Solomon, after all his experience of worldly greatness and pleasure, at last pitched upon this, as the great felicity of human life, and the only good use that is to be made of a prosperous and plentiful fortune. Eccles. iii. 12, "I know (says he, speaking of riches) "that there is no good in them, but for "a man to rejoice and do good in his life." And certainly the best way to take joy in an estate, is to do good with it: and a greater and wiser than Solomon has said it, even he "who is the power and
"wisdom

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Consider farther, that this is one of the great and substantial parts of religion, and next to the love and honour, which we pay to Almighty GOD, the most acceptable service that we can do to him; it is one table of the law, and next to the first and great commandment, of “loving the LORD our GOD,” and very like to it. “And the second is like unto “it,” (says our SAVIOUR) “Thou shalt love thy “neighbour as thyself;” like to it, in the excellency of it; and equal to it, in the necessary obligation of it. “And this commandment (says St. John, 1 epist. chap. 4. v. 21.) “have we from him, that he who “loveth GOD, love his brother also.” The first commandment indeed excels in the dignity of the object, because it enjoins the love of GOD; but the second seems to have the advantage in the reality of it’s effects: for the love of GOD consists in our acknowledgment, and honour of him; but our “righteousness and goodness extend not to him;” we can do him no real benefit and advantage: but our love to men is really useful and beneficial to them; for which reason, GOD is contented in many cases, that the external honour and worship, which he requires of us by his positive commands, should give way to that natural duty of love and mercy which we owe to one another. “I will have mercy” (says GOD in the prophet Amos) “and not sacrifice.”

And to shew how great a value GOD puts upon this duty, he hath made it the very testimony of our love to himself; and for want of it, hath declared that he will reject all our other professions and testimonies of love to him, as false and insincere. “Whoso hath this worlds good,” (saith St. John, 1 epist.

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1 epist. iii. 17.) “and seeth his brother have need,
 “and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from
 “him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”
 And again, chap. iv. ver. 20. “If a man say,
 “I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar;
 “for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath
 “seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not
 “seen?”

You see the duty here recommended, both in the
 extent and in the excellency of it; “let us do good.”
 I proceed to consider, in the

Ild place, the extent of this duty, in respect of
 it's object, which is all mankind, but more especial-
 ly Christians, those that are of the same faith and
 religion. “Let us do good unto all men, especially
 “unto those that are of the household of faith.”
 So that the object, about which this duty is conver-
 sant, is very large, and takes in all mankind; “let
 “us do good unto all men.” The Jews confined
 their love and kindness to their own kindred and na-
 tion; and because they were prohibited familiarity
 with idolatrous nations, and were enjoined to main-
 tain a perpetual enmity with Amalek, and the seven
 nations of Canaan, whom God had cast out before
 them, and devoted to ruin; they looked upon them-
 selves as perfectly discharged from all obligation of
 kindness to the rest of mankind: and yet it is cer-
 tain, that they were expressly enjoined by their law,
 to be kind to strangers, because they themselves had
 been strangers in the land of Egypt. But our SA-
 VIOUR hath restored this law of love and charity to
 it's natural and original extent; and hath declared
 every one that is of the same nature with ourselves to
 be our neighbour, and our brother; and that he is to
 be treated by us accordingly, whenever he stands
 in

in need of our kindness and help ; and to shew that none are out of the compass of our charity, he hath expressly commanded us to extend it to those who of all others can least pretend to it, even our enemies and persecutors.

So that if the question be about the extent of our charity in general, these two things are plainly enjoined by the christian religion.

1. Negatively, That we should not hate nor bear ill-will to any man, or do him any harm or mischief. " Love worketh no evil to his neighbour," (saith the apostle) Rom. xiii. 10. And this negative charity every man may exercise towards all men, without exception, and that equally, because it does not signify any positive act, but only that we abstain from enmity and hatred, from injury and revenge, which it is in every man's power, by the grace of God, and the due care and government of himself, to do.

2. Positively, the law of charity requires, that we should bear an universal good-will to all men, and wish every man's happiness, and pray for it, as sincerely as we wish and pray for our own ; and if we be sincere in our wishes, and prayers for the good of others, we shall be so in our endeavours to procure and promote it.

But the great difficulty is, as to the exercise of our charity, and the real expressions and effects of it, in doing good to others ; which is the duty here meant in the text, and (as I told you before) does more particularly relate to the relief of those who are in want and necessity. And the reason of the difficulty is, because no man can do good to all in this kind, if he would ; it not being possible for any man to come to the knowledge of every man's necessity and distress ; and if he could, no man's ability
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can possibly reach to the supply and the relief of all mens wants. And indeed this limitation the text gives to this duty ; “ As we have opportunity (says the apostle) “ let us do good unto all men ; ” which either signifies, as occasion is offered, or as we have ability of doing, or both ; as I shall shew afterwards.

So that it being impossible to exercise this charity to all men that stand in need of it, it is necessary to make a difference, and to use prudence and discretion in the choice of the most fit and proper objects. We do not know the wants of all men, and therefore the bounds of our knowledge do of necessity limit our charity within a certain compass ; and of those whom we do know, we can relieve but a small part for want of ability ; from whence it follows, that though a man were never so charitably disposed, yet he must of necessity set some rules to himself, for the management of his charity to the best advantage. What those rules are, cannot minutely and nicely be determined ; when all is done, much must be left to every man’s prudence and discretion, upon a full view and consideration of the case before him, and all the circumstances of it ; but yet such general rules may be given, as may serve for the direction of our practice in most cases ; and for the rest, every man’s prudence, as well as it can, must determine the matter. And the rules which I shall give, shall be these.

First, Cases of extremity ought to take the first place, and do for that time challenge precedence of all other considerations. If a person be in great and present distress, and his necessity so urgent, that if he be not immediately relieved, he must perish ; this is so violent a case, and calls so loud for present help, that there is no resisting of it, whatever the person be ; though a perfect stranger to us, though
most

most unworthy, though the greatest enemy we have in the world, yet the greatness of his distress does so strongly plead for him, as to silence all considerations to the contrary; for after all, he is a man, and is of the same nature with ourselves; and the consideration of humanity ought, for that time, to prevail over all objections against the man, and to prefer him to our charity, before the nearest relation and friend, who is not in the like extremity. In other cases we not only may, but ought to relieve our friends, and those that have deserved well of us in the first place: but if our enemy be in extremity, then that divine precept takes place, "if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink."

Secondly, In the next place, I think, that the obligation of nature, and the nearness of relation, does challenge a preference; for there is all the reason in the world, if other things be equal, that we should consider and supply the necessity of those, who are of our blood and kindred, and members of our family, before the necessities of strangers, and those who have no relation to us. There is a special duty incumbent upon us, and another obligation beside that of charity, to have a particular care and regard for them. In this case not only christianity, but nature ties this duty upon us, 1 Tim. v. 8. "If any man provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house," for them that are of his family, "he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel;" that is, he doth not only offend against the law of christianity, but against the very dictates of nature, which prevail even amongst infidels. And our SAVIOUR hath told us, that when our parents stand in need of relief, it is more acceptable to

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God, to employ our estates that way, than to devote them to him, and his immediate service ; and that it is a kind of sacrilege to consecrate that to God, whereby our parents may be profited, and provided for in their necessity.

Thirdly, the obligation of kindness, and benefits, lays the next claim to our charity. If they fall into want, who have obliged us by their former kindness and charity, both justice and charity do challenge from us a particular consideration of their case ; and proportionably, if we ourselves have been obliged to their family, or to any other that are nearly related to them.

Fourthly, those “ who are of the household of faith,” and of the same religion, and members of the same mystical body, and do partake of the same holy mysteries, the body and blood of our blessed SAVIOUR, the strictest bond of love and charity ; these fall under a very particular consideration in the exercise of our charity : and of this the apostle puts us in mind, in the last words of my text ; “ Let us do good unto all men, especially unto those that are of the household of faith.” God hath a special love and regard for such ; and those whom God loves ought to be very dear to us.

And this, perhaps, was a consideration of the first rank, in those times when Christians lived among heathens, and were exposed to continual wants and sufferings ; but it signifies much less now, that Christianity is the general profession of a nation, and is too often made use of to very uncharitable purposes ; to confine mens bounty and benefits to their own sect and party, as if they, and none but they, were “ the household of faith ;” a principle, which I know not whether it hath more of judaism or of popery in it.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, after these, the merit of the persons who are the objects of our charity, and all the circumstances belonging to them, are to be valued and considered, and we accordingly to proportion our charity, and the degrees of it. I shall instance in some particulars, by which a prudent man may judge of the rest.

Those who labour in an honest calling, but yet are oppressed with their charge, or disabled for a time by sickness, or some other casualty; these many a time need as much, and certainly deserve much better than common beggars; for these are useful members of the commonwealth; and we cannot place our charity better, than upon these, who do what they can to support themselves.

Those likewise who are fallen from a rich and plentiful condition, without any fault or prodigality of their own, merely by the providence of God, or some general calamity; these are more especially objects of our charity, and liberal relief.

And those also, who have been charitable, and have liberally relieved others, when they were in condition to do it; or the children, or near relations of those who were eminently charitable and beneficial to mankind, do deserve a particular regard in our charity. Mankind being (as I may say) bound in justice, and for the honour of God's providence, to make good his promise, to preserve such from extreme necessity.

And lastly, those, whose visible wants, and great age and infirmities, do plead for more than ordinary pity, and do, at first sight, convince every one that sees them, that they do not beg out of laziness, but of necessity, and because they are not able to do any thing towards their own support and subsistence.

There are innumerable circumstances more, which it would be endless to reckon up ; but these which I have mentioned are some of the chief ; and, by proportion to these, we may direct ourselves in other cases.

Sixthly, those whom we certainly know to be true objects of charity, are to be considered by us, before those who are strangers to us, and whose condition we do not know, yea though, in common charity, we do not disbelieve them ; because in reason and prudence we are obliged to prefer those, who are certainly known to us ; since we find by experience, that there are many cheats and counterfeit beggars, who can tell their story, and carry about testimonials of their own making ; and likewise because we run the hazard of misplacing our charity, when there are objects enough besides, where we are sure we shall place it right ; and charity misplaced, as it is in truth and reality no charity in itself, so it is hardly any in us, when we squander it so imprudently, as to pass by a certain and real object, and give it to those of whom we are not certain that they are true objects of charity. In this blind way a man " may give all his goods to the poor," as he thinks, and yet do no real charity. And therefore, unless we be able to relieve " every one that asks," we must of necessity make a difference, and use our best prudence in the choice of the most proper objects of our charity.

And yet we ought not to observe this rule so strictly, as to shut out all whom we do not know, without exception ; because their case, if it be true, may sometimes be much more pitiable, and of greater extremity, than the case of many whom we do know ; and then it would be uncharitable to reject such,

such, and to harden our hearts so far against them, as utterly to disbelieve them; because it is no fault of theirs, that we do not know them; no, their wants may be real, notwithstanding that; especially when their extremity seems great, we ought not to stand upon too rigorous a proof and evidence of it, but should accept of a fair probability.

Seventhly, those who suffer for the cause of religion, and are stripped of all for the sake of it, ought to have a great precedence in our charity to most other cases. And this of late hath been, and still is the case of many among us, who have fled hither for refuge, from the tyranny and cruelty of their persecutors, and have been, by a most extraordinary charity of the whole nation, more than once extended to them, most seasonably relieved: but especially by the bounty of this great city, whose liberality, upon these occasions, hath been beyond all example, and even all belief. And I have often thought, that this very thing, next to the mercy and goodness of Almighty God, hath had a particular influence upon our preservation and deliverance from those terrible calamities, which were just ready to break in upon us; and, were we not so stupidly insensible of this great deliverance which God hath wrought for us, and so horribly unthankful to him, and to the happy instruments of it, might still be a means to continue the favour of God to us. And what cause have we to thank God, who hath allotted to us this more blessed, and more merciful part, to give, and not to receive; to be free from persecution ourselves, that we might give refuge and relief to those that are persecuted!

III. We must consider the measure of our charity, *ὡς καὶ πὸν ἔχομεν*, which our translation renders,

“ as

“ as we have opportunity ;” others, as we have ability : So that this expression may refer, either to the occasions of our charity, or to the season of it, or to the proportion and degree of it.

1. It may refer to the occasions of our charity, “ as we have opportunity, let us do good,” that is, according as the occasions of doing good shall present themselves to us, so often as an opportunity is offered. And this is an argument of a very good and charitable disposition, gladly to lay hold of the occasions of doing good ; as it were to meet opportunities when they are coming towards us. This forwardness of mind in the work of charity, the apostle commends in the Corinthians, 2 Cor. ix. 2. “ I know the forwardness of your minds, for which “ I boast of you to them of Macedonia :” And this he requires of all Christians, Tit. iii. 8. that they should “ be ready to every good work ;” and 1 Tim. vi. 18. that we be “ ready to distribute, “ willing to communicate.” Some are very ready to decline these opportunities, and to get out of the way of them ; and when they thrust themselves upon them, and they cannot avoid them, they do what they do grudgingly, and not with a willing mind.

2. It may refer to the season of this duty, *ὡς χαίρον ἐχομεν*, whilst we have time, *ὡς* for *ἕως*, whilst this life lasts ; so Grotius does understand and interpret this phrase ; and then the apostle does hereby intimate to them the uncertainty of their lives, especially in those times of persecution. And this consideration holds in all times, in some degree, that our lives are short and uncertain ; that it is but a little while that we can serve God in this kind, namely, while we are in this world, in this vale of misery and wants. In the next world there will be no occasion,

no opportunity for it ; we shall then have nothing to do, but to reap the reward of the good we have done in this life, and to receive that blessed sentence from the mouth of the great judge of the world, “ Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, before the foundation of the world : for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat, &c.” And, *Euge bone serve !* “ Well done, good and faithful servant ! thou hast been faithful in a little, and I will make thee ruler over much.” God will then declare his bounty and goodness to us, and open those inexhaustible treasures of glory and happiness, which all good men shall partake of, in proportion to the good which they have done in this world. Or else,

3. (Which I take to be the most probable meaning of this phrase,) It may refer to the degree of this duty, in proportion to our ability and estate ; as we have ability, “ let us do good unto all men.” And this the phrase will bear, as learned men have observed ; and it is very reasonable to take it in this sense, at least as part of the meaning of it, either expressed, or implied. For, without this, we cannot exercise charity, though there were never so many occasions for it ; and then this precept will be of the same importance with that of the son of Sirach, Ecclus. xxxv. 10. “ Give unto the most high according as he hath enriched thee ;” and with that counsel, Tob. iv. 7. “ Give alms, ἐκ τῶν ὑπερ-
“ χούων, according to thy substance,” and v. 8. “ If thou hast abundance, give alms accordingly.” And this may be reasonably expected from us ; for where-ever his providence gives a man an estate, it is but in trust for certain uses and purposes, among which charity and alms is the chief ; and we must
be

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be accountable to him, whether we have disposed it faithfully to the ends for which it was committed to us. It is an easy thing, with him, to level mens estates, and to give every man a competency ; but he does on purpose suffer things to be distributed so unequally, to try and exercise the virtues of men in several ways ; the faith and patience of the poor, the contentedness of those in a middle condition, the charity and bounty of the rich. And, in truth, wealth and riches, that is, an estate above what sufficeth our real occasions and necessities, is in no other sense a blessing, than as it is an opportunity put into our hands, by the providence of God, of doing more good ; and if we do not faithfully employ it to this end, it is but a temptation and a snare ; “ and “ the rust of our silver and our gold will be a witness against us ;” and we do but “ heap up treasures together against the last day.”

But what proportion our charity ought to bear to our estates, I shall not undertake to determine. The circumstances of men have too much variety in them to admit of any certain rule ; some may do well, and others may do better ; every man as God hath put into his heart, and according to his belief of “ the recompence which shall be made at “ the resurrection of the just.” I shall only say in general, that if there be first a free and willing mind, that will make a man charitable to his power ; for “ the liberal man will devise liberal things.” And we cannot propose a better pattern to ourselves in this kind, than the king and queen, who are, as they ought to be (but as it very seldom happens) the most bright and shining examples of this greatest of all graces and virtues, charity and compassion to the poor and persecuted. I proceed to the

IV. Thing

IVth thing considerable in the text, viz. Our unwearied perseverance in this work of doing good; “let us not be weary in well-doing.” After we have done some few acts of charity, yea, though they should be very considerable, we must not sit down and say we have done enough: There will still be new objects, new occasions, new opportunities for the exercise of our charity, springing up and presenting themselves to us. Let us never think that we can do enough in the way of doing good. The best and the happiest beings are most constant and unwearied in this work of doing good. The holy angels of God are continually employed in ministering for the good of “those, who shall be heirs of salvation:” and the Son of God, when he appeared in our nature, and “dwelt among us,” that he might be a perfect and familiar example to us of all holiness and virtue, “he went about doing good” to the bodies, and to the souls of men. How diligent and unwearied was he in this work! It was his employment and his pleasure, his meat and drink, the joy and the life of his life. And God himself, though he is infinitely and perfectly good in himself, yet he still continues “to do good,” and is never weary of this blessed work. It is the nature, and the perfection, and the felicity of God himself; and how can we be weary of that work, which is an imitation of the highest excellency and perfection, and the very essence of happiness!

V. And lastly, here is the argument and encouragement to the chearful discharge of this duty, “because in due season we shall reap, if we faint not; therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good unto all men. In due season we shall reap;” that is, sooner or later, in this world, or in the

other, we shall receive the full reward of our well-doing.

And now I have explained this duty to you, as plainly and briefly as I could, the hardest part of my task is yet behind, to persuade men to the practice of it; and to this purpose I shall only insist upon the promise in the text, "be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not:" We shall reap the pleasure and satisfaction of it in our own minds, and all the other mighty advantages of it in this world, and the vast and unspeakable reward of it in the other.

First, We shall reap the pleasure and satisfaction of it in our own minds; and there is no sensual pleasure that is comparable to the delight of doing good. This Cato makes his boast of, as the great comfort and joy of his old age, *conscientia bene actæ vitæ, multorumque benefactorum recordatio jucundissima*. The remembrance of a well-spent life, and of many benefits and kindnesses done by us to others, is one of the most pleasant things in the world. Sensual pleasures soon die and vanish; but that is not the worst of them, they leave a sting behind them; and when the pleasure is gone, nothing remains but guilt, and trouble, and repentance: whereas the reflection upon any good we have done, is a perpetual spring of peace and pleasure, to us, and no trouble and bitterness ensues upon it; the thoughts of it lie even and easy in our minds; and so often as it comes to our remembrance, it ministers fresh comfort to us.

Secondly, We shall likewise reap other mighty advantages by it in this world. It is the way to derive a lasting blessing upon our estates. What we give in alms and charity is consecrated to God, and is one of the chiefest and most acceptable sacrifices in the

the christian religion : so the apostle tells us, Heb. xiii. 16. " To do good, and to communicate, for-
" get not ; for with such sacrifices God is well
" pleased." It is like the first-fruits under the law,
which being dedicated and offered up to God, did
derive a blessing upon their whole harvest.

And it procures for us also the blessing and pray-
ers of those to whom we extend our charity ; their
blessing, I say, upon us and ours, and all that we
have : and " is it a small thing in our eye, to have,"
(as Job speaks) " the blessing of them, who are
" ready to perish, to come upon us ?" " The fervent
" prayer" of the poor for us " availeth much ;" for
God hath a special " regard to the prayers of the de-
" stitute, and his ear is open to their cry."

Few men have faith to believe it, but certainly
charity is a great security to us in the times of evil,
and that not only from the special promise and pro-
vidence of God, which is engaged to preserve those
from want, who are ready to relieve the necessity of
others, Prov. xi. 25. " The liberal soul shall be
" made fat ; and he that watereth, shall be watered
" also himself," and Prov. xxviii. 27. " He that
" giveth unto the poor shall not lack. He shall not
" be afraid in the evil time, and in the days of dearth
" he shall be satisfied," says the Psalmist. But be-
sides the promise and providence of God, our cha-
rity and alms are likewise a great security to us, from
the nature and reason of the thing itself. Whoso-
ever is charitable to others, does wisely bespeak the
charity and kindness of others for himself, against
the day of necessity ; for there is nothing that makes
a man more and surer friends, than our bounty ; this
will plead for us, and stand our friend in our great-
est troubles and dangers ; " for a good man," saith

the apostle, that is, for one that is ready to oblige others by great kindneses and benefits, "one would even dare to die." It has sometimes happened, that the obligation which a man hath laid upon others by a chearful and seasonable charity, hath, in time of danger and extremity, done him more kindness than all his estate could do for him. "Alms," saith the wise man, "hath delivered from death."

And in times of publick distress, and when we are beset with cruel and powerful enemies, who, "if God were not on our side, would swallow us up quick," the publick charity of a nation does many times prove it's best safeguard and shield. There is a most remarkable passage to this purpose, Ecclus. xxix. 11, 12, 13. "Lay up thy treasure according to the commandments of the most High, and it shall bring thee more profit, than gold. Shut up alms in thy store-houses, and it shall deliver thee from all affliction. It shall fight for thee against thine enemies, better than a mighty shield and a strong spear."

And of this I doubt not but we of this nation, by the great mercy and goodness of Almighty God, have had happy experience in our late wonderful deliverance, under the conduct and valour of one of the best and bravest of princes, and to whom, by too many among us, the most unworthy and unthankful returns have been made, for the unwearied pains he hath undergone, and for the desperate hazards he hath exposed himself to for our sakes, that ever were made to so great and generous a benefactor; so great a benefactor, I say, not only to these nations, but to all Europe, in asserting and vindicating their liberties against the insolent tyranny and pride of one of the greatest oppressors of mankind; of whom I

may say, as Job does of the Leviathan, Job xli. 33. 34. "Upon earth there is not his like. He beholdeth all high things; he is king over all the children of pride."

And beyond all this, the blessing of God does descend upon the posterity of those who are eminently charitable, and great benefactors to mankind. This David observes in his time; "I have been young" (says he) "and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread;" and what he means by the righteous man, he explains in the next words, "he is ever merciful, and lendeth."

I shall only add upon this head, that the practice of this virtue will be one of our best comforts at the hour of death, and that we shall then look back upon all the good we have done in our life with the greatest contentment and joy imaginable. Xenophon, in his Cyrus, which he designed for the perfect idea of a good prince, represents him in the last minutes of his life, addressing himself to God to this purpose, "Thou knowest that I have been a lover of mankind; and now that I am leaving this world, I hope to find that mercy from thee, which I have shewed to others." These words that excellent heathen historian thought fit to come from the mouth of so excellent a prince, as he had described him, just as he was leaving the world; by which we may see, what the light of nature thought to be the best comfort of a dying man. This brings me to the

Third and last particular which I mentioned, the vast and unspeakable reward, which this grace and virtue of charity will meet with in the other world. It will plead for us at the day of judgment, and procure for us a most glorious "recompence at the resurrection"

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resurrection of the just," and that proportionable to the degrees of our charity; 2 Cor. ix. 6. "He
"which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly:"
"and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap boun-
"tifully;" and from this consideration, the apostle encourageth our perseverance in well-doing; "let us
"not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall
"reap, if we faint not;" that is, we shall certainly meet with the reward of it, if not in this world, yet in the other.

And now that I have declared this duty to you, together with the mighty pleasure, and advantages, and rewards of it, I crave leave to present you with some of the best occasions, and opportunities of the exercise and practice of it. And for your encouragement hereto, I shall read to you the present state of the chief hospitals belonging to this great city, and of the disposal of their charity for the last year.

And now I have laid before you these great objects of your charity, and the best arguments I could think of to incline and stir up your minds to the exercise of this excellent grace and virtue; as there is no time left for it, I having, I am afraid, already tired your patience, so, I hope, there is no need to press this duty any farther upon you, since you are willing and forward of yourselves, and so very ready to every good work. This great city hath a double honour due to it, of being both the greatest benefactors in this kind, and the most faithful managers, and disposers of it; and I am now in a place most proper for the mention of CHRIST'S Hospital, a protestant foundation of that most pious and excellent prince Edward VI. which, I believe, is one of the best instances of so large and so well-managed a charity, this day in the world.

And

And now to conclude all: if any of you know any better employment than "to do good;" any work that will give truer pleasure to our minds; that hath greater and better promises made to it, "the promises of the life that now is, and that which is to come;" that we shall reflect upon with more comfort, when we come to die; and that through the mercies and merits of our blessed SAVIOUR, will stand us in more stead at the day of judgment; let us mind that work: but if we do not, let us apply ourselves to this business of charity with all our might, and "let us not be weary in well-doing, because in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

"Now the GOD of peace, who brought again from the dead our LORD JESUS CHRIST, the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, through JESUS CHRIST, to whom with thee, O father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, thanksgiving and praise, both now and for ever," Amen.

S E R M O N CLIX.

The necessity of repentance and faith.

ACTS xx. 21.

Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward GOD, and faith toward our LORD JESUS CHRIST.

TO have seen St. Paul in the pulpit, was one of those three things which St. Augustine thought worth the wishing for. And sure it were very desirable

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rable to have seen this glorious instrument of God, who did such wonders in the world, to have heard that plain and powerful eloquence of his, which was so "mighty through God, for the casting down of strong holds, and the subduing of men to the obedience of the gospel;" to have beheld the zeal of this holy man, who was all on fire for God, with what ardency of affection, and earnestness of expression, he persuaded men to come in to CHRIST, and entertain the gospel. This were very desirable; but seeing it is a thing we cannot hope for, it should be some satisfaction to our curiosity, to know what St. Paul preached, what was the main subject of his sermons, whither he referred all his discourses, and what they tended to. This he tells us in the words that I have read to you, that the main substance of all his sermons was "repentance toward God, and faith toward our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

The occasion of the words was briefly this; St. Paul being in his journey to Jerusalem, and intending to be there by the day of Pentecost, that he might not be hindered in his journey, he resolves to pass by Ephesus, and only to call to him the elders of the church to charge them with their duty, and the care of the church; and to engage them hereto, he tells them how he had carried and demeaned himself among them, v. 18. with what diligence and vigilance he had watched over them, with what affection and earnestness he had preached to them, v. 19, 20. And here in the text he tells them, what had been the sum of his doctrine, and the substance of those many sermons he had preached among them, and what was the end and design of all his discourses, viz. To persuade men to "repentance toward God, and faith toward our LORD JESUS CHRIST; testifying both to the Jews and Greeks, &c. I shall

I shall explain the words a little, and then fix upon the observations which I intend to speak to, because I design this only as a preface to some larger discourses of faith and repentance.

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For explication. Testifying, the word is *διαμαρτυρόμενος*, which signifies to testify, to prove a thing by testimony ; so it is used, Heb. ii. 6. “ But one “ in a certain place testifieth, saying.” In heathen writers the word is often used in a law sense, for contesting by law, and pleading in a cause ; and from hence it signifies, earnestly to contend or persuade by arguments and threatenings. In the use of the LXX. it signifies to protest, to convince, to press earnestly, to persuade. It is used most frequently by St. Luke in a very intense signification, and is sometimes joined with exhorting, which is an earnest persuading to a thing, Acts ii. 40. “ And with “ many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, save yourselves from this untoward generation ;” and with preaching, Acts viii. 25. “ And “ when they had testified and preached the word of “ the LORD ;” and so Acts xviii. 5. “ Being pressed “ in spirit, he testified to the Jews, that JESUS was “ the CHRIST.” Being pressed in spirit, signifies intention and vehemency in testifying to them, that he did vehemently endeavour to convince them ; it seems to be equivalent to the expression, v. 28. where it is said, “ Apollos did mightily convince the Jews that “ JESUS was the CHRIST ;” that is, did use such persuasions and arguments as were sufficient to convince ; and to mention no more, Acts xxviii. 23. “ He “ expounded and testified the kingdom of God, “ persuading them concerning JESUS.”

S. Paul in his epistle to Timothy useth these words in a most vehement sense, for giving a solemn charge,

1 Tim. v. 21. "I charge thee before God and the
 " LORD JESUS CHRIST," the word is διαμαρτύρο-
 μαί; and so 2 Tim. ii. 14. "charging them before
 " the LORD, that they strive not about words;"
 and so 2 Tim. iv. 1. "I charge thee before God
 " and the LORD JESUS CHRIST;" and here in the
 text the word seems to be of a very high and intense
 signification, because of the circumstances mentioned
 before and after; he tells us before, that he taught
 them "at all seasons," v. 18. "publicly and from
 " house to house," v. 20. And afterwards at the
 " 31st. v. that "he warned them day and night
 " with tears." So that "testifying to the Jews re-
 " pentance and faith," must signify his pressing and
 persuading of them with the greatest vehemency, to
 turn from their sins, and believe on the LORD JESUS
 CHRIST; his charging on them these things as their
 duty, his pleading with them the necessity of faith
 and repentance, and earnestly endeavouring to con-
 vince them thereof.

"Repentance toward God, and faith toward our
 " LORD JESUS CHRIST:" what is the reason of
 this appropriation of repentance and faith, the one
 as properly respecting God, and the other our LORD
 JESUS CHRIST? I answer. Repentance doth pro-
 perly respect God, because he is the party offended,
 and to whom we are to be reconciled; the faith of
 the Gospel doth properly refer to the LORD JESUS
 CHRIST, as the chief and principal object of it; so
 that by "testifying to them repentance toward
 " God, &c. we are to understand that the apostle
 did earnestly press and persuade them to repent of
 their sins, whereby they had offended God, and to
 believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, as the Messiah,
 the person that was ordained of God, and sent to be
 the SAVIOUR of the world.

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From the words thus explained, this is the observation that doth naturally arise,

That repentance and faith are the sum and substance of the gospel; and that ministers ought with all earnestness and vehemency to press people to repent and believe, to charge them with these as their duty, and by all means to endeavour to convince them of the necessity of them.

In the handling of this I shall do these two things.

First, shew you what is included in repentance and faith, that you may see that they are the sum of the gospel. And,

Secondly, shew you the necessity of them.

First, What is included in these.

I. Repentance; this properly signifies a change of mind, a conviction that we have done amiss, so as to be truly sorry for what we have done, and heartily to wish that we had not done it. To repent, is to alter our mind, to have other apprehensions of things than we had, to look upon that now as evil, which we did not before; from whence follows sorrow for what we have done, and a resolution of mind for the future not to do again that which appears now to us to be so evil, that we are ashamed of it, and troubled for it, and wish we had never done it. So that repentance implies a conviction that we have done something that is evil and sinful, contrary to the law we are under, and those obligations of duty and gratitude that lie upon us, whereby God is highly provoked and incensed against us, and we in danger of his wrath, and the sad effects of his displeasure; upon which we are troubled, and grieved, and ashamed for what we have done, and wish we had been wiser, and had done otherwise; hereupon we resolve never to do any thing that is sinful, that is con-

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trary to our duty and obligations to God, and by which we may provoke him against us. These two things are contained in a true repentance, a deep sense of, and sorrow for the evils that are past, and the sins that we have committed; and a firm purpose and resolution of obedience for the future, of abstaining from all sin, and doing whatever is our duty; the true effect of which resolution, is the breaking off the practice of sin, and the course of a wicked life, and a constant course of obedience.

II. Faith in CHRIST is an effectual believing the revelation of the gospel, the history and the doctrine of it; the history of it, that there was such a person as JESUS CHRIST, that he was the true Messias, prophesied of and promised in the Old Testament, that he was born and lived and preached, and wrought the miracles that are recorded, that he was crucified and rose again, and ascended into heaven, that he was "the Son of God," and sent by him into the world, by his doctrine to instruct, and by the example of his life to go before us in the way to happiness, and by the merit and satisfaction of his death and sufferings, to appease and reconcile God to us, and to purchase for us the pardon of our sins and eternal life, upon the conditions of faith and repentance and sincere obedience; and that to enable us to the performance of these conditions, he promised, and afterward sent his holy Spirit, to accompany the preaching of his gospel, and to assist all Christians to the doing of that which God requires of them; this is the history of the gospel.

Now the doctrine of it contains the precepts and promises and threatenings of it, and faith in CHRIST includes a firm belief of all these; of the precepts of the gospel as the matter of our duty, and the rule

rule of our life ; and of the promises and threatenings of the gospel, as arguments to our duty, to encourage our obedience, and deter us from sin. So that he that believes the LORD JESUS, believes him to be the great guide and teacher sent from God, to bring and conduct men to eternal happiness, and that therefore we ought to hearken to him and follow him ; this is to believe his prophetic office. He believes that he is “ the author of salvation,” and hath purchased for us forgiveness of sins, ransom from hell, and eternal life and blessedness upon the conditions before mentioned, and therefore that we ought to rely upon him only for salvation, to own him for our SAVIOUR, and to beg of him his holy Spirit, which he hath promised to us, to enable us to perform the conditions required on our part ; this is to believe his priestly office. And lastly, he believes that the precepts of the gospel, being delivered to us by the Son of God, ought to have the authority of laws upon us, and that we are bound to be obedient to them ; and for our encouragement if we be so, that there is a glorious and eternal reward promised to us ; and for our terror if we be not, there are terrible and eternal punishments threatened to us ; to which rewards, the LORD JESUS CHRIST at the day of judgment will sentence men, as the great judge of the world ; and this is to believe the kingly office of CHRIST. And this is the sum of that which is meant by “ faith toward the LORD JESUS CHRIST,” which the apostle saith was one subject of his preaching.

And the proper and genuine effect of this faith is to live as we believe, to conform our lives to the doctrine, to the truth whereof we assent. Hence it is that true Christians, that is, those who fashioned their
lives

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lives according to the gospel, are called believers ; and the whole of christianity is many times contained in this word believing, which is the great principle of a christian life. As in the old testament all religion is expressed by “ the fear of GOD ;” so in the new, by “ faith in CHRIST.”

And now you see what is included in repentance and faith, you may easily judge whether these be not the sum of the gospel, that men should forsake their sins and turn to GOD, and believe in the revelation of the gospel concerning JESUS CHRIST, that is, heartily entertain and submit to it. What did CHRIST preach to the Jews, but that they should repent of their sins, and believe on him as the Messias ? And what did the apostles preach, but to the same purpose ? When St. Peter preached to the Jews, Acts ii. the effect of his sermon and the scope of it was to persuade them “ to repent and be baptized in the “ name of JESUS,” that is, to profess their belief in him, v. 38. And so Acts iii. 19. This is the conclusion of his discourse, “ repent therefore and be “ converted,” and then he propounded CHRIST to them as the object of their faith, being the great prophet that was prophesied of by Moses, who should “ be raised up among them,” v. 22. So likewise St. Paul when he preached to the Jews and Gentiles, these were his great subjects, Acts xvii. 30. This is the conclusion of his sermon to the Athenians, to persuade them to repent by the consideration of a future judgment ; and to persuade them to believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who was to be the judge of the world, from the miracle of his resurrection ; “ But now he commands all men every “ where to repent, because he hath appointed a day, “ &c. whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, “ in

“ in that he hath raised him from the dead.” So that you see that these are the great doctrines of the gospel, and were the sum of the apostles preaching; all their sermons were persuasives to these two duties of repentance and faith.

Secondly, for the necessity of these doctrines. They are necessary for the escaping of eternal misery, and attaining of everlasting happiness. And this will appear, by considering the nature of them, and the relation they have to both these.

For the avoiding of eternal punishment, it is necessary the guilt should be removed, which is an obligation to punishment, and that cannot be but by pardon; and sure we cannot imagine that God will ever pardon us without repentance; he will never remit to us the punishment of sin, so long as we tell him we are not at all troubled for what we have done, and we are of the same mind still, and will do the same again; and till we repent, we tell God this, and we may be sure God will not cast away his pardons upon those that despise them; so that repentance is necessary to the escaping of hell.

And faith in CHRIST is necessary to it; for if this be the method of God's grace, not to pardon sin without satisfaction, and JESUS CHRIST hath made satisfaction for sin by the merit of his sufferings, and if it be necessary that we should believe this, that the benefit hereof may redound to us; then faith in CHRIST is necessary to the obtaining of the pardon of sin, by which the guilt of sin is removed, that is, our obligation to eternal punishment.

And then for attaining salvation. CHRIST having in the gospel revealed to us the way and means to eternal happiness, it is necessary that we should believe this revelation of the gospel by JESUS CHRIST,
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in order to this end. So that you see the necessity of faith and repentance, because without these we can neither escape misery, nor attain to happiness.

I should now come to draw some inferences from this discourse, but I will first give satisfaction to a query or two, to which this discourse seems to have given occasion.

1. Query. You will say, why do I call repentance a doctrine of the gospel? It is a doctrine of nature. Natural religion tells us, that when we have offended God, we ought to be sorry for it, and resolve to amend and reform.

Ans. I do not make the doctrine of repentance proper to the gospel, as if it had not been revealed to the world before; but because it is a doctrine which the gospel very much presseth and persuadeth men to, and because the great motives and enforcements of it are peculiar to the gospel, So that the doctrine of repentance, considered with those powerful reasons and arguments to it which the gospel furnisheth us withal, is in this sense proper to the gospel, and not known to the world before.

There are two motives and enforcements to repentance which the gospel furnisheth us with.

1. Assurance of pardon and remission of sins in case of repentance, which is a great encouragement to repentance, and which, before the gospel, the world had never any firm and clear assurance of.

2. Assurance of eternal rewards and punishments after this life, which is a strong argument to persuade men to change their lives, that they may avoid the misery that is threatened to impenitent sinners, and be qualified for the happiness which it promiseth to repentance and obedience. And this the apostle tells us in the formentioned place, Acts xvii.

30, 31. is that which doth, as it were, make repentance to be a new doctrine that did come with the gospel into the world, because it was never before enforced with this powerful argument ; “ the times “ of that ignorance God winked at ; but now he “ calls upon all men every where to repent ; because, &c.” When the world was in ignorance, and had not such assurance of a future state, of eternal rewards and punishments after this life, the arguments to repentance were weak and feeble in comparison of what they now are, the necessity of this duty was not so evident. But now God hath assured us of a future judgment, now exhortations to repentance have a commanding power and influence upon men ; so that repentance, both as it is that which is very much pressed and inculcated in the gospel, and as it hath it's chief motives and enforcements from the gospel, may be said to be one of the great doctrines of the gospel.

Query 2. Whether the preaching of faith in CHRIST, among those who are already Christians, be at all necessary ? Because it seems very improper, to press those to believe in CHRIST, who are already persuaded that he is the Messiah, and do entertain the history and doctrine of the gospel.

Ans. The faith which the apostle here means, and which he would persuade men to, is an effectual belief of the gospel ; such a faith as hath real effects upon men, and makes them to live as they believe ; such a faith as persuades them of the need of these blessings that the gospel offers, and makes them to desire to be partakers of them, and in order thereto to be willing to submit to those terms and conditions of holiness and obedience, which the gospel requires. This is the faith we would persuade men to, and

there is nothing more necessary to be pressed upon the greatest part of Christians than this ; for how few are there, among those who profess to believe the gospel, who believe it in this effectual manner, so as to conform themselves to it ? The faith which most Christians pretend to is merely negative ; they do not disbelieve the gospel, they do not consider it, nor trouble themselves about it, they do not care, nor are concerned whether it be true or not ; but they have not a positive belief of it, they are not possessed with a firm persuasion of the truth of those matters which are contained in it ; if they were, such a persuasion would produce real and positive effects. Every man naturally desires happiness, and it is impossible that any man that is possessed with this belief, that in order to happiness it is necessary for him to do such and such things ; and that if he omit or neglect them he is unavoidably miserable, that he should not do them. Men say they believe this or that, but you may see in their lives, what it is they believe. So that the preaching of this faith in CHRIST, which is the only true faith, is still necessary.

I. Infer. “ If repentance towards GOD, and faith in “ the LORD JESUS CHRIST,” be the sum and substance of the gospel, then from hence we may infer the excellency of the christian religion, which insists only upon those things that do tend to our perfection and our happiness. Repentance tends to our recovery, and the bringing of us back as near as may be to innocence. *Primus innocentiae gradus est non peccasse ; secundus, pœnitentia :* and then “ faith in the LORD “ JESUS CHRIST,” though it be very comprehensive, and contains many things in it, yet nothing but what is eminently for our advantage, and doth very much conduce to our happiness. The historical part
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of the gospel acquaints us with the person and actions of our SAVIOUR, which conduceth very much to our understanding of the author and means of our salvation. The doctrinal part of the gospel contains what God requires on our part, and the encouragements and arguments to our duty, from the consideration of the recompence and rewards of the next life. The precepts of CHRIST's doctrine are such as tend exceedingly to the perfection of our nature, being all founded in reason, in the nature of God, and of a reasonable creature; I except only those positive institutions of the christian religion, the two sacraments, which are not burthensom, and are of excellent use. This is the first.

II. We may learn from hence what is to be the sum and end of our preaching, to bring men to repentance and a firm belief of the gospel; but then it is to be considered, that we preach repentance, so often as we preach either against sin in general, or any particular sin or vice; and so often as we persuade to holiness in general, or to the performance of any particular duty of religion, or to the exercise of any particular grace; for repentance includes the forsaking of sin, and a sincere resolution and endeavour of reformation and obedience. And we preach repentance so often as we insist upon such considerations and arguments, as may be powerful to deter men from sin, and to engage them to holiness. And we preach "faith towards our LORD JESUS CHRIST," so often as we declare the grounds of the christian religion, and insist upon such arguments as tend to make it credible, and are proper to convince men of the truth and reasonableness of it; so often as we explain the mystery of CHRIST's incarnation, the history of his life, death, resurrection, ascension, and

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intercession, and the proper ends and use of these ; so often as we open the method of God's grace for the salvation of sinners, the nature of the covenant between God and us, and the conditions of it, and the way how a sinner is justified and hath his sins pardoned, the nature and necessity of regeneration and sanctification ; so often as we explain the precepts of the gospel, and the promises and threatenings of it, and endeavour to convince men of the equity of CHRIST's commands, and to assure them of the certainty of the eternal happiness which the gospel promises to them that obey it, and of the eternal misery which the gospel threatens to those that are disobedient ; all this is preaching "faith in our LORD JESUS CHRIST."

III. This may correct the irregular humours and itch in many people, who are not contented with this plain and wholesom food, but must be gratified with sublime notions and unintelligible mysteries, with pleasant passages of wit, and artificial strains of rhetoric, with nice and unprofitable disputes, with bold interpretations of dark prophecies, and peremptory determinations of what will happen next year, and a punctual stating of the time when Anti-christ shall be thrown down, and Babylon shall fall, and who shall be employed in this work. Or if their humour lies another way, you must apply yourself to it, by making sharp reflections upon matters in present controversy and debate, you must dip your stile in gall and vinegar, and be all satyr and invective against those that differ from you, and teach people to hate one another, and to fall together by the ears ; and this men call gospel preaching, and speaking of seasonable truths.

Surely St. Paul was a gospel preacher, and such

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an one as may be a pattern to all others ; and yet he did none of these ; he preached what men might understand, and what they ought to believe and practise, in a plain and unaffected and convincing manner ; he taught “ such things as made for peace,”

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“ and whereby he might edify and build up men in “ their holy faith.” The doctrines that he preached will never be unseasonable, that men should leave their sins, and believe the gospel, and live accordingly.

And if men must needs be gratified with disputes and controversies, there are these great controversies between God and the sinner to be stated and determined ; whether this be religion, to follow our own lusts and inclinations, or to endeavour to be like God, and to be conformed to him, in goodness, and mercy, and righteousness, and truth, and faithfulness ? Whether JESUS CHRIST be not the Messias and SAVI-
CUR of the world ? Whether faith and repentance and sincere obedience be not the terms of salvation, and the necessary conditions of happiness ? Whether there shall be a future judgment, when all men shall be sentenced according to their works ? Whether there be heaven and hell ? Whether good men shall be eternally and unspeakably happy, and wicked men extremely and everlastingly miserable ? These are the great controversies of religion, upon which we are to dispute on God’s behalf against sinners. God asserts, and sinners deny these things, not in words, but which is more emphatical and significant, in their lives and actions. These are practical controversies of faith and it concerns every man to be resolved and determined about them, that he may frame his life accordingly.

And for repentance ; God says, repentance is a forsaking of sin, and a thorough change and amendment

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ment of life ; the sinner says, that it is only a formal confession, and a slight asking of God forgiveness : God calls upon us speedily and forthwith to repent ; the sinner saith it is time enough, and it may safely be deferred to sickness or death ; these are important controversies, and matters of moment. But men do not affect common truths ; whereas these are most necessary : And indeed whatever is generally useful and beneficial, ought to be common, and not to be the less valued, but the more esteemed for being so.

And as these doctrines of faith and repentance are never unseasonable, so are they more peculiarly proper when we celebrate the holy sacrament, which was instituted for a solemn and standing memorial of the christian religion, and is one of the most powerful arguments and persuasives to repentance and a good life.

The faith of the gospel doth more particularly respect the death of CHRIST ; and therefore it is called “ faith in his blood,” because that is more especially the object of our faith ; the blood of CHRIST, as it was a seal of the truth of his doctrine, so it is also a confirmation of all the blessings and benefits of the new covenant.

And it is one of the greatest arguments in the world to repentance. In the blood of CHRIST we may see our own guilt, and in the dreadful sufferings of the Son of God, the just desert of our sin ; “ he
“ hath born our griefs, and carried our sorrows, he
“ was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised
“ for our iniquities ; therefore the commemoration of his sufferings should call our sins to remembrance, the representation of his body broken, should melt our hearts ; and so often as we remember that “ his
“ blood

“ blood was shed for us, our eyes” should “ run
“ down with rivers of tears ;” so often as we “ look
“ upon him whom we have pierced,” we should
“ mourn over him.” When the son of God suffered,
“ the rocks were rent in sunder ;” and shall
not the consideration of those sufferings be effectual
to break the most stony and obdurate heart ?

What can be more proper when we come to this
sacrament, than the renewing of our repentance ?
When we partake of this passover, we should “ eat
“ it with bitter herbs.” The most solemn expressions
of our repentance fall short of those sufferings,
which our blessed SAVIOUR underwent for our sins.
If “ our head were waters, and our eyes fountains
“ of tears,” we could never sufficiently lament the
curled effects and consequences of those provocations
which were so fatal to the Son of God.

And that our repentance may be real, it must be
accompanied with the resolution of a better life ; for
if we return to our sins again, “ we trample under
“ foot the Son of God, and profane the blood of
“ the covenant,” and out of “ the cup of salvation,
“ we drink our own damnation,” and turn that
which should save us into an instrument and seal of
our own ruin.

S E R M O N CLX.

Of confessing and forsaking sin, in order to pardon.

P R O V. xxviii. 13.

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but who-so confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy.

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CLX.

Preached
on Ash-
wednes-
day.

SINCE we are all sinners, and liable to the justice of God, it is a matter of great moment to our comfort and happiness, to be rightly informed by what means, and upon what terms, we may be reconciled to God, and find mercy with him. And to this purpose the text gives us this advice and direction, "who-so confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy."

In which words there is a great blessing and benefit declared and promised to sinners, upon certain conditions. The blessing and benefit promised, is "the mercy and favour of God," which comprehends all the happy effects of God's mercy and goodness to sinners. And the conditions upon which this blessing is promised are two, "confession of our sins, and forsaking of them;" and these two contain in them the whole nature of that great and necessary duty of repentance, without which a sinner can have no reasonable hopes of the mercy of God.

I. Here is a blessing or benefit promised, which is "the mercy and favour of God." And this in the full extent of it, comprehends all the effects of the mercy and goodness of God to sinners, and doth primarily import the pardon and forgiveness of our sins.

And

And this probably Solomon did chiefly intend in this ^{S F R M.} ^{CLX.} expression; for so the mercy of God doth most frequently signify in the old testament, viz. the forgiveness of our sins. And thus the prophet explains it,

Isa. lv. 7. "Let the wicked forsake his ways, and
"the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him
"return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy,
"and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

But now since the clear revelation of the gospel, the mercy of God doth not only extend to the pardon of sin, but to power against it; because this also is an effect of God's free grace and mercy to sinners, to enable them, by the grace of his holy Spirit, to master and mortify their lusts, and to persevere in goodness to the end.

And it comprehends also our final pardon and absolution at the great day, together with the glorious reward of eternal life, which the apostle expresseth, by "finding mercy with the LORD in that day." And this likewise is promised to repentance, Acts iii. 19. "Repent ye therefore, and be converted,
"that your sins may be blotted out, when the times
"of refreshing shall come from the presence of the
"LORD, and he shall send JESUS CHRIST, who
"before was preached unto you;" that is, that when JESUS CHRIST who is now preached unto you shall come, you may receive the final sentence of absolution and forgiveness.

And thus much shall suffice to have spoken of the blessing and benefit here promised, the mercy of God; which comprehends all the blessed effects of the divine grace and goodness to sinners, the present pardon of sin, and power to mortify sin, and to persevere in a good course, and our final absolution by

the sentence of the great day, together with the merciful and glorious reward of eternal life.

II. We will consider in the next place, the conditions upon which this blessing is promised, and they are two, the confessing and forsaking of our sins, "Whofo confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall have mercy;" and these two do contain and constitute the whole nature of repentance, without which a sinner can have no reasonable hopes to find mercy with God. I begin with the

First, the confession of our sins; by which is meant a penitent acknowledgment of our faults to God; to God I say, because the confession of our sins to men is not, generally speaking, a condition of the forgiveness of them, but only in some particular cases, when our sins against God are accompanied and complicated with scandal and injury to men. In other cases the confession of our sins to men is not necessary to the pardon of them; as I shall more fully shew in the progress of this discourse.

All the difficulty in this matter is, that the confession of our sins is opposed to the covering and concealing of them: "he that covereth his sin shall not prosper: but whofo confesseth them shall have mercy." But no man can hope to hide his sin from God, and therefore confession of them to God cannot be here meant. But this objection, if it be of any force, quite excludeth confession to God, as no part of Solomon's meaning; when yet confession of our sins to God is granted, on all hands, to be a necessary condition of the forgiveness of them. And to take away the whole ground of this objection; men are said in scripture, when they do not confess their sins and repent of them, to hide and conceal them from God: not to acknowledge them is as if

a man went about to cover them. And thus David opposeth confession of sins to God, to the hiding of them, Psal. xxxii. 5. " I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid : I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD." So that this is no reason, why the text should not be understood of the confessing of our sins to God.

But because the necessity of confessing our sins to men (that is, to the priest) in order to the forgiveness of them, is a great point of difference between us and the church of Rome, it being by them esteemed a necessary article of faith, but by us, so far from being necessary to be believed, that we do not believe it to be true ; therefore for the clear stating of this matter, I shall briefly enquire into these two things.

I. Whether confession of our sins to the priest, as taught and practised in the church of Rome, be necessary to the forgiveness of them.

II. How far the disclosing and revealing of our sins to the ministers of God is convenient upon other accounts, and for other purposes of religion.

I. Whether confession of our sins to the priest, and the manner in which it is taught and practised in the church of Rome, be necessary to the forgiveness of them. What manner of confession this is, the council of Trent hath most precisely determined, viz. " Secret confession to the priest alone, of all
" and every mortal sin, which upon the most diligent search and examination of our consciences
" we can remember ourselves to be guilty of, since
" our baptism; together with all the circumstances
" of those sins, which may change the nature of
" them; because without the perfect knowledge of
" these, the priest cannot make a judgment of the

SERM.
CLX.

“ nature and quality of men’s sins, nor impose fitting penance for them.” This is the confession of sins required in the church of Rome, which the same council of Trent, without any real ground from scripture or ecclesiastical antiquity, doth most confidently affirm, “ to have been instituted by our LORD, “ and by the law of GOD to be necessary to salvation, and to have been always practised in the catholic church.”

I shall as briefly as I can examine both these pretences, of the divine institution, and constant practice of this kind of confession.

First, for the divine institution of it, they mainly rely upon three texts; in the first of which there is no mention at all of confession, much less of a particular confession of all our sins with the circumstances of them; in the other two there is no mention of confession to the priests: and yet all this ought clearly to appear in these texts, before they can ground a divine institution upon them; for a divine institution is not to be founded upon obscure consequences, but upon plain words.

The first text, and the only one upon which the council of Trent grounds the necessity of confession, is, John xx. 23. “ Whosoever sins ye remit, they “ are remitted; and whosoever sins ye retain, they “ are retained:” It is a sign they were at a great loss for a text to prove it, when they are glad to bring one that hath not one word in it concerning confession, nor the least intimation of the necessity of it.

But let us see how they manage it to their purpose. The apostles and their successors (saith Bellarmine) by this power of remitting and retaining sins, are constituted judges of the case of penitents; but they cannot judge without hearing the cause, and this

this infers particular confession of sins to the priest, from whence he concludes it necessary to the forgiveness of sins.

SERM.
CLX.

But do not the ministers of the gospel exercise this power of remitting sins in baptism? And yet particular confession of all sins to the priest is not required, no not in the church of Rome, in the baptism of adult persons. And therefore according to them, particular confession of sin to the priest is not necessary to his exercising the power of remitting sins, and consequently the necessity of confession cannot be concluded from this text.

And to shew how they are puzzled in this matter, Vasquez by a strange device concludes the necessity of confession from the power of retaining sins; for (says he) if the priest have a power of retaining sins, that is of denying pardon and absolution to the penitent, then he may impose confession as a condition of forgiveness, and not absolve the penitent upon other terms. But supposing the priest to have this unreasonable power, this makes confession no otherwise necessary by divine institution, than going to Jerusalem or China is, in order to the forgiveness of our sins, or submitting to any other foolish condition, that the priest thinks fit to require; for according to this way of reasoning, this power of retaining sins makes every foolish thing, that the priest shall impose upon the penitent, to be necessary by divine command and institution.

But the truth is, this power of remitting and retaining sins is exercised by the ministers of the gospel, in the administration of the sacraments, and the preaching of the gospel, which is called "the word of reconciliation, the ministry whereof is committed to them." And thus the ancient fathers understood

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derstood it; and as a great divine told them in the council of Trent, it was perhaps never expounded by any one father concerning the business of confession.

The second text they alledge to this purpose is 1 John i. 9. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Here indeed is confession; but general, not particular, as appears by the opposition, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: but if we confess our sins," that is, if we acknowledge our selves to have been sinners. And then there is not a word of confessing to the priest; the confession here meant is plainly to God, because it follows, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins," that is God, who is necessarily understood in the former part of the sentence; as if it had run thus, "if we confess our sins to God, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

The third text is, Jam v. 16. "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another." And here again there is only mention of confession, but not a word of the priest: and for another reason, if I had been to advise them, they should not have prest this text for their service in this cause, because it does them as much hurt as good; for it is certain, the duty of confession here enjoined is reciprocal and mutual, "confess your sins one to another:" so that if by virtue of this text the people are bound to confess their sins to the priest, the priest is hereby as much obliged to confess his sins to the people; which I dare say is more than they have a mind to prove from this text. The plain meaning whereof is this, that as Christians should be ready to perform all mutual offices of charity, so to assist and comfort one another,

another by their counsel and prayers. And therefore the apostle adviseth Christians when they are sick, if at the same time they be under any spiritual trouble, by reason of the guilt of any sin lying upon their consciences, to lay open their case to one another, that so they may have the help of one anothers advice and prayers; "confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed," both of your bodily and spiritual distemper. Not that the priest or minister is here excluded; St. James had spoken of that particular before, that when "any was sick," he should "send for the elders of the church," that he might in the first place have the benefit of their counsel and prayers; and then because private Christians may also be useful to one another in this kind, he adds, that they should also lay open their condition and troubles "to one another," that so they might have the help of one anothers advice and prayers; and very probably all the confession here meant of private Christians to one another, is of the offences and injuries they may have been guilty of, one towards another; that they should be reconciled upon this occasion, and as a testimony of their charity, should "pray one for another;" whereas they are bound "to send for the elders of the church," and they are "to pray over them," as an act not only of charity, but of superiority, and by virtue of their office in the church, a more especial blessing being to be expected from their prayers.

These three texts are the main arguments from scripture, which they of the church of Rome bring to prove their auricular or secret confession to be of divine institution; and woful proofs they are: which shews what miserable shifts they are reduced to, who resolve to maintain a bad cause.

I pro-

Of confessing and forsaking sin,

I proceed in the second place, to discover the falsehood of their other pretences, that this kind of confession hath always been practised in the catholick church; and not only so, but believed absolutely necessary to the remission of mens sins, and their eternal salvation.

The truth of the whole matter is this: publick confession and penance for open and scandalous crimes was in use, and with great strictness observed in the first ages of Christianity; and there was then no general law or custom, that exacted secret confession of sins to the priest, as a necessary part of repentance, and condition of forgiveness: afterward publick penance was by degrees disused, which plainly shews, that, in the opinion of the church, this discipline, how useful soever, was not of absolute necessity to restore men to the favour of God.

In place of this came in private confession to the priest, particularly appointed to this office, and called the penitentiary; but upon occasion of a scandal that happened, this also was abrogated by Nectarius bishop of Constantinople; which shews that neither was this necessary. And this act of Nectarius was justified by his successor St. Chrysostom, who does over and over most expressly teach, that confession of our sins to men is not necessary to the forgiveness of them, but that it is sufficient to confess them to God alone; so that St. Chrysostom does plainly stand condemned by the decrees of the council of Trent.

And thus for several ages the matter rested, till the degeneracy of the church of Rome growing towards it's height, about the IX. and X. centuries, some began to contend for the necessity of secret confession; and this in the year 1215. in the IV. council of Lateran under Pope Innocent III. was decreed and established. And

And this is the first publick law that was made ^{S E R M.}
in the christian church concerning this matter, not- ^{CLX.}
withstanding all the boasts of the council of Trent,
about the antiquity of this institution and practice;
for Gratian, who lived about fifty years before this
council, tells us, that in his time several wise and
religious men were of the contrary opinion, and did
not hold confession necessary by virtue of any divine
law. Afterwards in the council of Florence, and
especially in that of Trent, this decree of the coun-
cil of Lateran was confirmed and enlarged in many
particulars, of which I have already given some ac-
count.

And whereas they pretend for themselves the uni-
versal practice not only of the past, but present church,
we are able to shew from clear testimony of their own
writers, that confession, as taught and practised in
the church of Rome, is no where else in use at this
day, neither among the Abyssines, nor Indians of
St. Thomas, nor the Nestorians, nor the Armenians,
nor the Jacobites, churches of great antiquity and
vast extent. And as for the Greek church, if we
may believe Gratian, and the author of the gloss up-
on the canon law, the Greeks had anciently no tra-
dition concerning the necessity of confession, nor do
they at this day agree with the Roman church in all
points concerning it.

So that, in short, there is no nation nor church
throughout the whole world, that bears the name of
christian, the Roman church only excepted, that doth
fully embrace and maintain the whole doctrine of the
council of Trent, concerning confession; and yet, ac-
cording to their principles, the whole is of equal ne-
cessity to be believed, as any part of it. With what
face then do they declare, that this manner of con-
fession

feffion always was, and still is observed in the catholic, that is, in the whole christian church ?

I have not time to shew the great and manifold inconveniencies and mischiefs of this practice : how infinite a torture it is to the consciences of men, by entangling them in endless doubts and scruples ; and how great a scandal it is to the christian profession, in the lewd management of it by the priests, is evident from the two bulls of pope Pius IV. and Gregory XV. which mention things too shameful to be declared ; not to insist upon other horrible abuses of it to the vilest and wickedest purposes ; not so much to direct the consciences of men, as to dive into their secrets, of which there are so many plain and notorious instances, that they are past denial.

The other thing pretended for it is, that it is a great restraint upon men from sin. And very probably it is so, to modest and well disposed persons : but experience shews how quite contrary an effect it hath upon others, who are the far greatest part of mankind. Does not all the world see in the popish countries, in the time of their carnival, just before Lent, the anniversary season of confession, how scandalous a liberty men take of doing lewd and wicked things ; and that for this very reason, because their consciences are presently to be eased and scoured (as they call it) by confession and absolution ? And they therefore take the opportunity to gratify their lusts, and fill up the measure of their iniquity at that time ; because with one labour they can set their consciences right, and clear them of all guilt. And they look upon this as a special piece of spiritual good husbandry, to quit their scores with God at once, that so they may have no occasion to trouble him, nor the priest, nor themselves again for a good while after.

So that confession, instead of being a restraint from sin, gives great encouragement to it, by deluding men into a vain hope of obtaining the pardon of their sins from time to time, though they still continue in the practice of them; by which device, mens sins are at once remitted and retained; the priest remits them by absolution, and the penitent retains them, by going on still in the commission of them, in hope of obtaining a new absolution as often as occasion shall require. I proceed to the

IId Enquiry, namely, how far the disclosing and revealing our sins to the ministers of God, may be convenient upon other accounts, and to other purposes of religion? To which the answer is very plain and short; so far as is necessary either to the direction, or the ease of mens consciences.

There are many cases wherein men, under the guilt and trouble of their sins, can neither appease their own minds, nor sufficiently direct themselves, without recourse to some pious and prudent guide; in these cases, men certainly do very well, and many times prevent a great deal of trouble and perplexity to themselves, by a timely discovery of their condition to some faithful minister, in order to their direction and satisfaction, without which they shall never perhaps be able to clear themselves of the obscurity and entanglement of their own minds, but by smothering their trouble in their own breasts, shall proceed from one degree of melancholy to another, till at last they be plunged either into distraction or despair; whereas the discovery of their condition in time, would prove a present and effectual remedy. And to this purpose, a general confession is for the most part sufficient; and where there is occasion for a more particular discovery, there is no

need of raking into the particular and foul circumstances of mens sins, to give that advice which is necessary for the cure and ease of the penitent ; a thing so far from being desirable, that it must needs be very grievous to every modest and good man.

And thus far confession is not only allowed, but encouraged among protestants. In the Lutheran churches, Chemnitius tells us, that private general confession is in use and practice. And Calvin freely declares, that he is so far from being against peoples repairing to their pastors to this purpose, that he earnestly wisheth it were every where observed before the receiving of the sacrament. And the same is the sense of our own church, laying no necessity upon men in this matter, but advising, especially before the sacrament, those who have any trouble upon their consciences, to repair to some discreet and faithful minister of God's word, for advice and satisfaction. And thus all the good use, which can be made of confession, may be had in our church, without the ill effects and consequences of the Romish confession, and without laying a yoke upon the consciences of men, which our SAVIOUR never laid.

And now I have, as briefly and as plainly as I could, stated this controversy between us and the church of Rome, concerning the necessity and use of secret confession to the ministers of God, as the proper guides and directors of our consciences. But it is granted on all hands, that confession of our sins to God is necessary ; and there is no doubt but it is here intended in the text, viz. a penitent acknowledgment of our sins ; the nature whereof I shall briefly explain to you.

And it must not only be a general confession that we are sinners ; but there must be a particular acknowledgment

ledgment of our sins to GOD, so far as upon a particular discussion and examination of our consciences, we can call them to remembrance ; especially our most heinous sins, which our consciences will not suffer us to forget, must be particularly acknowledged, with the several aggravations of them.

And this confession must be accompanied with such a shame and sorrow for our sins, as produceth in us a sincere resolution to leave them, and to betake ourselves to a better course. These are the principal ingredients of a penitent confession.

1. There must be a shame, without which there is no hope of amendment. Confession always supposeth conviction of a fault ; and he that is truly convinced that he hath done amiss, cannot but be ashamed of what he hath done. And thus the penitents in scripture were wont to make confession of their sins to GOD ; Ezra ix. 6. “ O my GOD, says he, I am “ ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee my “ GOD.” So Jeremiah, ch. iii. 25. “ We lie down “ in our shame, and our confusion covereth us ; “ for we have sinned against the LORD.” And so likewise Daniel, chap. ix. 5. “ We have sinned, “ and have committed iniquity, and done wicked- “ ly ; unto us belongeth confusion of face.” And thus our SAVIOUR describes the penitent behaviour of the publican, as ashamed to look up to that GOD whom he had offended, Luke xviii. 13. “ He “ would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven ; “ but smote upon his breast, saying, GOD be mer- “ ciful to me a sinner.”

2. Confession must be always accompanied with great sorrow for our sins, considering the great dishonour we have brought to GOD, and the danger into which we have brought ourselves ; “ I will “ declare

S E R M. “ declare mine iniquity, says David, and I will be
 CLX. “ sorry for my sin.”

And this sorrow must be proportionable to the degree of our sin. If we have been very wicked, and have sinned greatly against the LORD, and “ have multiplied our transgressions” and continued long in an evil course, have neglected GOD, and “ forgotten him days without number,” the measure of our sorrow must bear some proportion to the degree of our sins: if they have been “ as scarlet “ and crimson,” (as the prophet expresseth it) that is, of a deeper dye than ordinary, our sorrow must be as deep as our guilt; for it is not a slight trouble and a few tears that will wash out such stains.

Not that tears are absolutely necessary, though they do very well become, and most commonly accompany a sincere repentance. All tempers are not in this alike; some cannot express their sorrow by tears, even then when they are most inwardly and sensibly grieved. But if we can easily shed tears upon other occasions; certainly “ rivers of tears” ought to “ run down our eyes,” because we have broken GOD’s laws, the reasonable, and righteous, and good laws of so good a GOD, of so gracious a sovereign, of so mighty a benefactor, of the founder of our being, and the perpetual patron and protector of our lives: but if we cannot command our tears, there must however be great trouble and contrition of spirit, especially for great sins; to be sure to that degree as to produce the

3. Property I mentioned of a penitent confession, namely, a sincere resolution to leave our sins, and betake ourselves to a better course. He does not confess his fault, but stand in it, who is not resolved to amend. True shame and sorrow for our sins is
 utterly

utterly inconsistent with any thought of returning to them. It argues great obstinacy and impudence to confess a fault and continue in it. Whenever we make confession of our sins to God, "surely it is meet to say unto him, I will not offend any more; that which I know not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

This is the first part of repentance mentioned in the text, the first condition of our finding mercy with God, the penitent acknowledgment of our sins to him. I proceed to the

Second condition required to make us capable of the mercy of God, which is the actual forsaking of our sins; "whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." I shall not go about to explain what is meant by "forsaking sin," it is that which every body can understand, but few will do; there lies all the difficulty. I shall only put you in mind, that forsaking of sin comprehends our return to our duty, that necessarily follows from it. In sins of commission, he that hath left any vice, does thereby become master of the contrary virtue. *Virtus est vitium fugere*; not to be drunk, is to be sober; not to oppress, or defraud, or deal falsely, is to be just and honest: and for sins of omission, the forsaking of them is nothing else, but the doing of those duties which we omitted and neglected before. And therefore what Solomon here calls "forsaking of sin," is elsewhere in scripture more fully expressed, by "ceasing to do evil, and learning to do well," Isa. i. 16. By forsaking our sins, and turning to God; Isa. lv. 7. "Let the whicked man forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the LORD." By turning from all our sins, and keeping all God's

laws

SER M. laws and statutes; Ezek. xviii. 21. "If the wicked
 CLX. "will turn from all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which
 "is lawful and right."

And this is a most essential part of repentance, and a necessary condition of our finding mercy with God. That part of repentance which I have mentioned and insisted upon before, the penitent acknowledgment of our sins to God, with shame and sorrow for them, and a firm purpose and resolution to leave them; all this is but preparatory to the actual forsaking of them: that which perfects and completes repentance, is "to turn from our evilways," and "to break off our sins by righteousness."

And these terms of confessing and forsaking our sins, are reasonable in themselves, and honourable to God, and profitable to us; and upon lower terms we have no reason to expect the mercy of God, nor in truth are we capable of it, either by the present forgiveness of our sins, or the final absolution of the great day, and the blessed reward of eternal life. God peremptorily requires this change as a condition of our forgiveness and happiness; "repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," Acts iii. 19. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," Matth. xix. 17. "Without holiness no man shall see the LORD," Heb. xii. 14. And why should any man hope for the mercy of God upon other terms than those which he hath so plainly and peremptorily declared?

It is a mean and unworthy thought of God, to imagine that he will accept men to his favour and eternal life upon other terms than of better obedience. Will any wise father or prince accept less from his children and subjects? Will they be satisfied with

fighs

sighs and tears, as well as with obedience? And well pleased if they be but melancholy for their faults, though they never mend them? We must not impute that to God, which would be a defect of wisdom and good government in any father or prince upon earth. God values no part of repentance upon any other account, but as it tends to reclaim us to our duty, and ends in our reformation and amendment.

S E R M.
CLX.

This is that which qualifies us for the happiness of another life, and “makes us meet to be made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” And without this, though God should be pleased to forgive us, yet we could not forgive ourselves; and notwithstanding the legal discharge from guilt, the sting of it would remain, and we should, like our first parents after they had sinned, run away and hide ourselves from God, though he spake never so kindly to us. God hath placed in every man’s mind an inexorable judge, that will grant no pardon and forgiveness but to a reformed penitent, to him that hath such a sense of the evil of his past life, as to become a better man for the future.

And whoever entertains any other notion of the grace and mercy of God to sinners, confounds the nature of things, and does plainly overthrow the reason of all laws, which is to restrain men from sin: but when it is committed, to pardon it without amendment, is to encourage the practice of it, and to take away the reverence and veneration of those laws, which seem so severely to forbid it. So that next to impunity, the forgiveness of mens sins upon such easy and unfit terms gives boldness and encouragement to sin, and must necessarily in the opinion of men lessen the honour and esteem of God’s laws.

And thus I have considered and explained both the blessing and benefit which is here promised and declared, viz. "the mercy and favour of God," which comprehends both the present forgiveness of our sins, and power against them, and grace to persevere in goodness to the end, and our final absolution at the great day, and the glorious and merciful reward of eternal life : and likewise the conditions upon which this blessing is promised, viz. the penitent acknowledgment of our sins to God, with such shame and sorrow for them, as produceth a sincere resolution of leaving them, and returning to a better course, and the actual forsaking of them, which involves in it our actual return to our duty, and a constant and sincere obedience to the laws of God in the future course of our lives.

I shall now make some application of this discourse to ourselves. I am sure we are all nearly concerned in it. The best of us have many sins to confess and forsake ; some of us very probably have need to change the whole course of our lives, to put us into a capacity of the mercy of God. This work can never be unseasonable ; but there cannot be a more proper time for it, than when we are solemnly preparing ourselves to receive the holy sacrament ; in which as we do commemorate the great mercy of God to mankind, so we do likewise renew and confirm our covenant with him, that holy covenant wherein we engage ourselves to forsake our sins, as ever we expect the forgiveness of them at God's hand.

To persuade us hereto, be pleased to consider the reasonableness of the thing, the infinite benefit and advantage of it ; and which is beyond all other arguments, the absolute necessity of it, to make us
capable

capable of the mercy and forgiveness of God, in this world and the other, and “to deliver us from the wrath which is to come,” and from those terrible storms of vengeance, which will infallibly fall upon impenitent sinners : so that we have all the reason and all the encouragement in the world, to resolve upon a better course. Upon this condition, the mercy of God is ready to meet and embrace us, God will pardon our greatest provocations, and be perfectly reconciled to us. So he hath declared by the prophet, Isaiah i. 16. “Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well. Come now and let us reason together, saith the LORD ; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool.” And what greater encouragement can we desire, than that upon so easy and advantageous terms, God should be so ready to have an end put to all controversies and quarrels between him and us ?

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God,” to take up a serious resolution “to break off your sins by repentance,” and to reform whatever, upon due search and trial of your ways, you shall find to be amiss in your lives.

“I beseech you by the mercies of God,” that mercy which naturally “leads to repentance,” and which is “long-suffering to us-ward,” on purpose “that we may not perish, but come to repentance ;” which hath spared us so often, and is not yet exhausted and tired out by our intolerable obstinacy, and innumerable provocations ; that mercy which moved the Son of God to become man, to live among us, and to die for us ; who now as it were speaks to us

from the cross, extending his pierced hands, and painful arms to embrace us, and through the gasping wounds of his side let us see the tender and bleeding compassion of his heart; that mercy which if we now despise it, we shall in vain one day implore, and catch hold of, and hang upon, to save us from sinking into eternal perdition; that mercy, which how much soever we now presume upon, will then be so far from interposing between us and the wrath of God, that it will highly inflame and exasperate it: for whatever impenitent sinners may now think, they will then certainly find that the divine justice, when it is thoroughly provoked, and whetted by his abused mercy and goodness, will be most terribly severe, and like a razor set with oil, will cut the keener for it's smoothness.

“ Consider this all ye that forget God, lest he
“ tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver :
“ consider and shew yourselves men, O ye trans-
“ gressors !”

We do consider all this (may some perhaps say) but we have been great sinners, so great, that we doubt whether our case be not already desperate.

This, if it be sensibly said, with deep sorrow and contrition, with that shame and confusion of face, which becomes great offenders, is a good confession, and the best reason in the world, why ye should now “ break off your sins :” for if what you have already done, do really make your case so doubtful and difficult ; do not by sinning yet more and more against the LORD, make it quite desperate and past remedy ; do but you repent, and God will yet “ re-
“ turn and have mercy upon you.” And do not say you cannot do it, when it must be done, or you are undone. Power and necessity go together : when

men are hard pressed they find a power which they thought they had not ; and when it comes to the push, men can do that which they plainly see they either must do, or be ruined for ever.

But after all this, I am very sensible how great a need there is of God's powerful assistance in this case, and that it is not an ordinary resolution, and common measure of God's grace, that will reclaim those who have been long habituated to an evil course.

Let us therefore earnestly beg of him, that he would make these counsels effectual, that he would "grant us repentance unto life," that he would make us all sensible of our faults, sorry for them, and resolved to amend them ; and let us every one put up David's prayer to God for ourselves, "deal with thy servant according to thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes ; order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me ; teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes, that I may keep them unto the end."

I have now done ; I am only to mind you of another duty, which is to accompany our repentance, and fasting, and prayer, as a testimony of the sincerity of our repentance, and one of the best means to make our fasting and prayer acceptable to God, and to turn away his judgments from us, and that is charity and alms to the poor, whose number is very great among us, and their necessities very pressing and clamorous, and therefore do call for a bountiful supply.

And to convince men of the necessity of this duty, and the efficacy of it in conjunction with our repentance and fasting, and prayers, I shall only offer to your consideration a few plain texts of scripture, which

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which need no comment upon them. Dan. iv.
 27. It is the prophet's advice to Nebuchadnezzar ;
 " Break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine ini-
 " quity by shewing mercy to the poor ; if so be it
 " may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity. Acts x.
 4. the angel there tells Cornelius, " Thy prayers and
 " thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."
 Isa. lviii. 5. " Is not this the fast which I have
 " chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to un-
 " do the heavy burthens, and to let the oppressed
 " go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not
 " to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou
 " bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house ;
 " when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him,
 " and that thou hide not thyself from thy own flesh?
 " Then shall thy light break forth as the morning,
 " and thine health shall spring forth speedily, and
 " thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the
 " glory of the LORD shall be thy reward : then shalt
 " thou call, and the LORD shall answer thee ; thou
 " shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am." To
 which I will only add that gracious promise of our
 SAVIOUR ; " blessed are the merciful, for they shall
 " find mercy ;" and that terrible sentence in St.
 James, " He shall have judgment without mercy,
 " that hath shewed no mercy."

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Of confession, and sorrow for sin.

P S A L. xxxviii. 18.

I will declare mine iniquity, and be sorry for my sin.

IN this psalm David does earnestly beg mercy and forgiveness of God, and in order to the obtaining of it, he declares both his sins, and his repentance for them in these words, which contain in them two of the necessary ingredients, or at least concomitants of a true repentance, viz. confession of sin, and sorrow for it.

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I shall speak something of the first of these, viz. confession of sin: but the second, viz. sorrow for sin, shall be the main subject of my discourse.

I. Confession of sin; "I will declare mine iniquity," or as it is in the old translation, "I will confess my wickedness." Of which I shall speak under these three heads.

I. What confession of sin is.

II. How far it is necessary.

III. What are the reasons and grounds of this necessity.

I. What confession of sin is. It is a declaration or acknowledgment of some moral evil or fault to another, which we are conscious to ourselves we have been guilty of. And this acknowledgment may be made by us, either to God or man. The scripture mentions both. Confession of our sins to God is very frequently mentioned in scripture, as the first and necessary part of repentance; and sometimes,

times, and in some cases, confession to men is not only recommended, but enjoined.

II. How far confession of our sins is necessary. That it is necessary to confess our sins to GOD, the scripture plainly declares, and is I think a matter out of all dispute. For it is a necessary part of repentance, that we should confess our sins to GOD, with a due sense of the evil of them; and therefore the scripture maketh this a necessary qualification, and condition of pardon and forgiveness. Prov. xxviii.

13. "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins, shall have mercy." I John i. 9. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness;" implying that if we do not confess our sins to GOD, the guilt of them will still remain; to GOD I say, for of confession to him St. John plainly speaks, when he says, "He is faithful and just;" Who? GOD surely; who though he be not named before, yet is necessarily understood in the words before; "If we confess our sins," i. e. to GOD, "he is faithful and just."

A general confession of our sins is absolutely necessary; and in some cases a particular acknowledgment of them, and repentance for them, especially if the sins have been great and deliberate and presumptuous; in this case a particular confession of them, and repentance for them, is necessary so far as we can particularly recollect them, and call them to remembrance: whereas for sins of ignorance and infirmity, of surprize and daily incurfion, for lesser omissions, and the defects and imperfections of our best actions and services, we have all the reason that can be to believe, that GOD will accept of a general confession of them, and repentance for them. And if

If any man ask me, where I find this distinction in scripture, between a general and particular repentance; I answer, that it is not necessary it should be any where expressed in scripture, being so clearly founded in the nature and reason of the thing; because in many cases it is not possible that we should have a particular knowledge and remembrance of all our particular sins; as is plain in sins of ignorance, since our very calling them by that name does necessarily suppose that we do not know them. It is impossible we should remember those sins afterwards, which we did not know when they were committed: and therefore either a general repentance for these, and the other sins I mentioned of the like nature, must be sufficient, in order to the pardon of them; or we must say, that they are unpardonable, which would be very unreasonable, because this would be to make lesser sins more unpardonable than those which are far greater.

And yet though this difference between a general and particular repentance be no where expressly mentioned in scripture, there does not want foundation for it there. Psal. xix. 12. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret sins," (i. e.) such as we do not discern and take notice of, when they are committed: and yet David supposeth, that upon a general acknowledgment of them, and repentance for them, we may be cleansed from them; though we cannot make a particular acknowledgment of them, and exercise a particular repentance for them, because they are secret, and we do not particularly understand what they are.

As for our confessing our sins to men, both scripture and reason do in some cases recommend and enjoin it. As,

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Of confession, and sorrow for sin.

1. In order to the obtaining of the prayers of good men for us. James v. 16. "Confess your sins one to another;" he said before, "the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the LORD shall raise him up." This in all probability is meant of the miraculous power of prayer, which St. Chrysostom reckons among the miraculous gifts of the Spirit, bestowed upon Christians in the first ages of the church: and this is very much countenanced and confirmed by what presently follows after this command of "confessing our sins one to another, and praying one for another," and given as the reason of it; "for the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," the original is *δενσις ἐνεργημένη*, the inspired prayer, which, in the verse before, is called "the prayer of faith," meaning that miraculous faith, in the power whereof Christians did obtain of God whatever they were inspired to ask of him; according to our SAVIOUR'S promise in the gospel, concerning the efficacy of the prayers of Christians, which we find mentioned among the other miraculous powers, which were to be conferred upon them by the coming of the Holy Ghost.

2. Confession of our sins to men is likewise reasonable, in order to the ease and satisfaction of our minds, and our being directed in our duty for the future. In this case common reason and prudence, without any precept of scripture, will direct men to have recourse to this remedy, viz. to discover and lay open our disease to some skilful spiritual physician, to some faithful friend or prudent guide, in order to spiritual advice and direction, for the peace and satisfaction of our minds. And then,

3. In case our sins have been publick and scandalous, both reason and the practice of the christian church

church do require, that when men have publickly offended, they should give publick satisfaction, and open testimony of their repentance.

But as for private and auricular confession of our sins to a priest in all cases, and as of absolute necessity to our obtaining pardon and forgiveness from God, as the church of Rome teacheth, this is neither necessary by divine precept, nor by any constitution and practice of the ancient christian church, as I have shewn in my former discourse.

Not to mention the bad consequence of this practice, and the impious and dangerous use which hath been made of this seal of confession, for the concealing and carrying on of the most wicked and barbarous designs; and the deluding of the penitents, by drawing them into the commission of the same and greater sins, than those which they confessed, which the more devout persons of that church have frequently complained of. I proceed now to shew briefly in the

III^d Place, the grounds and reasons of the necessity of confessing our sins to God; and I shall but just mention them.

1. From the precept and command of God; for which I have already produced clear proof of scripture.

2. From the nature of the thing, because without this there can be no repentance towards God. He that will not so much as own the faults which he hath been guilty of, can never repent of them. If we will not confess our sins to God, we are never like to be sorry for them. Thus much for the first thing in the text, the confession of our sins. I proceed now to the

Second ingredient of repentance mentioned in the text, which is sorrow for sin; "I will declare mine

“ iniquity, and be sorry for my sin.” In the handling of this argument, I shall

- I. Consider the nature of this passion of sorrow.
- II. The reason and grounds of our sorrow for sin.
- III. The measure and degrees of it.
- IV. How far the outward expression of our inward grief by tears is necessary to a true repentance.

I. For the nature of this passion. Sorrow is a trouble or disturbance of mind, occasioned by something that is evil, done or suffered by us, or which we are in danger of suffering, that tends greatly to our damage or mischief: so that to be sorry for a thing, is nothing else but to be sensibly affected with the consideration of the evil of it, and of the mischief and inconvenience which is like to redound to us from it: which if it be a moral evil, such as sin is, to be sorry for it, is to be troubled that we have done it, and to wish with all our hearts that we had been wiser, and had done otherwise; and if this sorrow be true and real, if it abide and stay upon us, it will produce a firm purpose and resolution in us, not to do the like for the future.

It is true indeed, that we are said to be sorry for the death and loss of friends; but this is rather the effect of natural affection than of our reason, which always endeavours to check and moderate our grief for that which we cannot help, and labours by all means to turn our sorrow into patience: and we are said likewise to grieve for the miseries and sufferings of others; but this is not so properly sorrow as pity and compassion. Sorrow rather respects ourselves, and our own doings and sufferings. I proceed in the

II^d Place to enquire into the reasons and grounds of our sorrow for sin; and they, as I have already hinted, are these two; the intrinsical, or the consequent

quent evil of sin ; either the evil of sin in itself, or the mischiefs and inconveniencies which it will bring upon us. For every one that is sorry for any fault he is guilty of, is so upon one of these two accounts ; either upon the score of ingenuity, or of interest ; either because he hath done a thing which is unworthy in itself, or because he hath done something which may prove prejudicial to himself ; either out of a principle of love and gratitude to God, or from a principle of self-love. And though the former of these be the better, the more generous principle of sorrow ; yet the latter is usually the first ; because it is the more sensible, and toucheth us more nearly : for sin is a base and ill-natured thing, and renders a man not so apt to be affected with the injuries he hath offered to God, as with the mischief which is likely to fall upon himself. And therefore I will begin with the latter, because it is usually the more sensible cause of our trouble and sorrow for sin.

1. The great mischief and inconvenience that sin is like to bring upon us. When a man is thoroughly convinced of the danger into which his sins have brought him, that they have “ made him a child of “ wrath,” and “ a son of perdition,” that he is thereby fallen under the heavy displeasure of Almighty God, and liable to all those dreadful curses which are written in his book, that ruin and destruction hang over him, and that nothing keeps him from eternal and intolerable torments, but the patience and long-suffering of God, which he does not know how soon it may cease to interpose between him and the wrath of God, and let him fall into that endless and insupportable misery, which is the just portion and desert of his sins ; he that lays to heart the sad estate and condition into which he hath brought himself by
sin,

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fin, and the mischiefs which attend him every moment of his continuance in that state, and how near they are to him, and that there is but a step between him and death, and hardly another between that and hell, he cannot surely but be very sorry for what he hath done, and be highly displeased and offended with himself, that he should be the author of his own ruin, and have contributed as much as in him lies to his everlasting undoing.

2. Another and better principle of sorrow for sin, is ingenuity ; because we are sensible, that we have carried ourselves very unworthily towards God, and have been injurious to him, who hath laid all possible obligations upon us : for he hath made us, and hath given us our beings, and hath charged his watchful providence with the continual care of us ; his bounty hath ministred to the necessities and comforts of our life ; all the blessings that we enjoy, are the effects of his mere love and goodness, without any hope of requital, or expectation of any other return from us, than of love, of gratitude, and obedience ; which yet are of no advantage to him, but very beneficial and comfortable to ourselves : for he does not expect duty and obedience from us, with any regard of benefit to himself, but for our sakes, and in order to our own happiness.

Nay, his kindness did not stop here, but after we had abused him by our repeated provocations, yet he still continued his care of us ; and when we had farther provoked him to withdraw his love, and to call in his abused goodness, and had done what lay in us to make ourselves miserable, he would not suffer us to be undone, but found out a ransom for us, and hath contrived a way for the pardon of all our offences, and to reconcile us to himself, and to restore

us to happiness, by the most stupendous and amazing condescension of love and goodness that ever was, even by giving his only Son to die for us.

And can we reflect upon all this, and not be sorry and grieved at our very hearts, that we should be so evil to him, who hath been so good to us ; that we should be so undutiful to so loving a father, so unkind to so faithful and constant a friend, so ungrateful and unworthy to so mighty a benefactor ? If any thing will melt us into tears, surely this will do it, to consider that we have sinned against him, who made us, and continually preserves us, and after all our unkindness to him, did still retain so great a love for us, as to redeem us from hell and destruction, by the death and suffering of his Son, and notwithstanding all our offences does still offer us pardon and peace, life and happiness. Such considerations as these, seriously laid to heart, should, one would think, break the hardest heart, and make tears to gush even out of a rock. I proceed in the

III^d Place to consider the measure and degree of our sorrow for sin. That it admits of degrees, which ought to bear some proportion to the heinousness of our sins, and the several aggravations of them, and the time of our continuance in them, is out of all dispute : for though the least sin be a just cause of the deepest sorrow ; yet because our greatest grief can never bear a due proportion to the vast and infinite evil of sin, God is pleased to require and accept such measures of sorrow, as do not bear an exact correspondence to the malignity of sin, provided they be according to the capacity of our nature, and in some sort proportioned to the degree and aggravations of our sins ; i. e. Though the highest degree of our sorrow doth necessarily fall below the evil

of

of the least sin ; yet GOD requires that we should be more deeply affected with some sins than others.

But what is the lowest degree which GOD requires in a true penitent, and will accept, as it is impossible for me to tell, so it is unprofitable for any body to know : for no man can reasonably make this enquiry with any other design, than that he may learn how he may come off with GOD upon the cheapest and easiest terms. Now there cannot be a worse sign, that a man is not truly sensible of the great evil of sin, than this, that he desires to be troubled for it as little as may be, and no longer than needs must : and none surely are more unlikely to find acceptance with GOD, than those who deal so nearly, and endeavour to drive so hard a bargain with him.

And therefore I shall only say this in general, concerning the degrees of our sorrow for sin ; that sin being so great an evil in itself, and of so pernicious a consequence to us, it cannot be too much lamented and grieved for by us : and the more and greater our sins have been, and the longer we have continued and lived in them, they call for so much the greater sorrow, and deeper humiliation from us : for the reasoning of our SAVIOUR concerning Mary Magdalene, “ She loved much, because much was “ forgiven her,” is proportionably true in this case, those who have sinned much, should sorrow the more.

And then we must take this caution along with us, that if we would judge aright of the truth of our sorrow for sin, we must not measure it so much by the degrees of sensible trouble and affliction, as by the rational effects of it, which are hatred of sin, and a fixed purpose and resolution against it for the future : for he is most truly sorry for his miscarriage, who looks upon what he hath done amiss with abhor-

rence

repentance and detestation of the thing, and wisheth he had not done it, and censures himself severely for it, and thereupon resolves not to do the like again. And this is the character which St. Paul gives of a godly sorrow, 2 Cor. vii. 10. that "it worketh repentance," *μετάνοιαν*, it produceth "a real change in our minds," and makes us to alter our purpose and resolution: and though such a person may not be so passionately and sensibly afflicted for sin, yet it appears by the effect, that he hath a deeper and more rational resentment of the evil of it, than that man who is sad and melancholy and drooping for ever so long a time, and after all returns to his former sinful course; the degree of his sorrow may appear greater, but the effect of it is really less.

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IV. As for the outward expressions of our grief and sorrow. The usual sign and outward expression of sorrow is tears; but these being not the substance of our duty, but an external testimony of it, which some tempers are more unapt to than others; we are much less to judge of the truth of our sorrow for sin by these, than by our inward sensible trouble and affliction of spirit. Some persons are of a more tender and melting disposition, and can command their tears upon a little occasion, and upon very short warning; and such persons that can weep for every thing else that troubles them, have much more reason to suspect the truth of their sorrow for sin, if this outward expression of it be wanting. And we find in scripture, that the sorrow of true penitents does very frequently discover itself by this outward sign of it. Thus when Ezra and the people made confession of their sins to God, it is said, that "they wept very sore," Ezra x. Peter when he reflected upon that great sin of denying his master, it is said, "He

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“went forth and wept bitterly.” David also was abundant in this expression of his grief. In the book of Psalms he speaks frequently of his sighs and groans, and of “watering his couch with his tears :” yea so sensibly was he affected with the evil of sin, that he could shed tears plentifully for the sins of others, Psal. cxix. 136. “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy law.” In like manner Jeremiah tells us, that “his soul did weep in secret places, for the pride and obstinacy of the Jews ;” that “his eye did weep sore, and run down with tears ;” Jer. xiii. 17. And so likewise St. Paul, Philip iii. 18, 19. “There are many that walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of CHRIST.” And there seems to be this natural reason for it, that all great and permanent impressions upon the mind, all deep inward resentments have usually a proportionable effect upon the body, and the inferior faculties.

But though this happen very frequently, yet it is not so constant and certain : for all men have not the same tenderness of spirit, nor are equally prone to tears ; nay though a man can weep upon natural accounts, as upon the loss of a child, or near relation, or an intimate friend, or when he lies under a sharp bodily pain, yet a man may truly repent, though he cannot express his sorrow for sin the same way, provided he give testimony of it by more real effects ; and therefore the rule, which is commonly given by casuists in this case, seems to be more ensnaring than true and useful : namely, “That that man that can shed tears upon account of any evil less than that of sin, (as certainly all natural evils are) ought not to question the truth of his repentance for any sin that

that he hath committed, if he cannot shed tears for it." This I think is not true, because there is scarce any man of so hard and unrelenting a spirit, but the loss of a kind father, or a dear child, or other near relation, will force tears from him: and yet such a man, if it were to save his soul, may not be able at some times to shed a tear for his sins. And the reason is obvious; because tears do proceed from sensitive trouble, and are commonly the product of natural affection; and therefore it is no wonder, that they flow more readily and easily upon a natural account; because they are the effect of a cause suitable to their nature. But sorrow for sin, which hath more of the judgment and understanding in it, hath not its foundation in natural affection, but in reason; and therefore may not many times express itself in tears, though it may produce greater and more proper effects.

So that upon the whole matter, I see no reason to call in question the truth and sincerity of that man's sorrow and repentance, who hates sin and forsakes it, and returns to God and his duty, though he cannot shed tears, and express the bitterness of his soul for his sin, by the same significations that a mother doth for the loss of her only son. He that cannot weep like a child may resolve like a man, and that undoubtedly will find acceptance with God. A learned divine hath well illustrated this matter by this similitude. Two persons walking together espy a serpent, the one shrieks and cries out at the sight of it, the other kills it: so is it in sorrow for sin; some express it by great lamentation and tears, and vehement transports of passion; others by greater and more real effects of hatred and detestation, by forsaking their sins, and by mortifying and subduing

their lusts : but he that kills it does certainly best
 exprefs his inward displeasure and enmity against it.

The application I shall make of what hath been
 said upon this argument, shall be in two particulars.

I. By way of caution, and that against a double
 mistake about sorrow for sin.

1. Some look upon trouble and sorrow for sin, as
 the whole of repentance.

2. Others exact from themselves such a degree of
 sorrow, as ends in melancholy, and renders them un-
 fit both for the duties of religion, and of their par-
 ticular calling. The first concerns almost the gene-
 rality of men ; the latter but a very few in comparison.

1. There are a great many, who look upon trou-
 ble and sorrow for their sins, as the whole of re-
 pentance, whereas it is but an introduction to it. It
 is that which works repentance ; but is not repent-
 ance itself. Repentance is always accompanied with
 sorrow for sin ; but sorrow for sin does not always
 end in true repentance : sorrow only respects sin
 past ; but repentance is chiefly preventive of sin for
 the future. And God doth therefore require our
 sorrow for sin, in order to our forsaking of it. Heb.
 vi. 1. Repentance is there called "repentance from
 "dead works." It is not only a sorrow for them,
 but a turning from them.

There is no reason why men should be so willing
 to deceive themselves, for they are like to be the
 losers by it : but so we see it is, that many men are
 contented to be deceived to their own ruin ; and
 among many other ways, which men have to cheat
 themselves, this is none of the least frequent, to
 think that if they can but shed a few tears for sin
 upon a death-bed, which no doubt they may easily
 do, when they see their friends weeping about them,
 and

and apprehend themselves to be in imminent danger, not only of death, but of that which is more terrible, the heavy displeasure, and the fiery indignation of Almighty God, "into whose hands it is a fearful thing to fall;" I say, they think that if they can but do thus much, God will accept this for a true repentance, and hereupon grant them pardon and eternal life. And upon these fond hopes, they adjourn their repentance, and the reformation of their lives to a dying hour.

Indeed if I were to speak to a man upon his death-bed, I would encourage him to a great contrition and sorrow for his sins, as his last and only remedy, and the best thing he can do at that time; but on the other hand, when I am speaking to those that are well and in health, I dare not give them the least encouragement to venture their souls upon this, because it is an hazardous, and almost desperate remedy; especially when men have cunningly and designedly contrived to rob God of the service of their lives, and to put him off with a few unprofitable sighs and tears at their departure out of the world. Our SAVIOUR tells us, that it is "not every one, that shall say unto him LORD! LORD! that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;" and that there is a time, when "many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able."

The sum of this caution is, that men should take heed of mistaking sorrow for sin, for true repentance, unless it be followed with the forsaking of sin and the real reformation of our lives. Ahab humbled himself, but we do not find that he was a true penitent. Judas was sorry for his sin, and yet for all that was "the son of perdition." Esau is a sad type of an ineffectual sorrow for sin, Heb. xii. where the

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apostle tells us, that "he found no place for repentance," that is, no way to change the mind of his father Isaac, "though he sought it carefully with tears." If sorrow for sin were repentance, there would be store of penitents in hell; for there is the deepest and most intense sorrow, "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth."

2. Another mistake which men ought to be cautioned against in this matter, is of those who exact from themselves such a degree of sorrow for sin, as ends in deep melancholy, as renders them unfit both for the duties of religion, and of their particular callings. But because there are but very few who fall into this mistake, I shall need to say the less to it. This only I shall say, that those who indulge their sorrow to such a degree, as to drown their spirits, and to sink them into melancholy and mopishness, and thereby render themselves unserviceable to God, and unfit for the necessities of this life, they commit one sin more to mourn for, and overthrow the end of repentance by the indiscreet use of the means of it. For the end of sorrow for sin, is the forsaking of it, and returning to our duty: but he that sorrows for sin, so as to unfit him for his duty, defeats his own design, and destroys the end he aims at.

II. The other part of the application of this discourse should be, to stir up this affection of sorrow in us. And here, if I had time, I might represent to you the great evil of sin, and the infinite danger and inconvenience of it. If the holy men in scripture, David, and Jeremiah, and St. Paul, were so deeply affected with the sins of others, as to shed rivers of tears at the remembrance of them; how ought we to be touched with the sense of our own sins, who are equally concerned in the dishonour brought

brought to God by them, and infinitely more in the danger they expose us to ! can we weep for our dead friends ? And have we no sense of that heavy load of guilt, of that body of death, which we carry about with us ? Can we be sad and melancholy for temporal losses and sufferings, and refuse to be comforted ? And is it no trouble to us to have lost heaven and happiness, and to be in continual danger of the intolerable sufferings and endless torments of another world ?

I shall only offer to your consideration, the great benefit and advantage which will redound to us from this “ godly sorrow ; it worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of,” saith St. Paul. If we would thus “ sow in tears,” we should “ reap in joy.” This sorrow would but “ continue for a time,” and “ in the morning” of the resurrection there would be joy to all eternity, “ joy unspeakable and full of glory.” It is but a very little while, and these “ days of mourning will be accomplished ;” and then “ all tears shall be wiped from our eyes ; and the ransomed of the LORD shall come to Sion with songs, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted : but woe unto you that laugh, for ye shall mourn and weep.” If men will rejoice in the pleasures of sin, and “ walk in the ways of their hearts, and in the sight of their eyes ;” if they will “ remove sorrow from their heart,” and put away all sad and melancholy thoughts from them, and are resolved to harden their spirits against the sense of sin, against the checks and convictions of their own consciences, and the suggestions of
God’s

God's holy Spirit, against all the arguments that God can offer, and all the methods that God can use to bring them to repentance; let them "know, that for "all these things God will bring them into judgment;" and because they would not give way to a timely and seasonable sorrow for sin, they shall lie down in eternal sorrow, "weeping and wailing and "gnashing of teeth shall be their portion for ever." From which sad and miserable estate, beyond all imagination, and past all remedy, God of his infinite goodness deliver us all, for JESUS CHRIST's sake.

"To whom, &c.

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*The unprofitableness of sin in this life,
an argument for repentance.*

J O B xxxiii. 27, 28.

*He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned,
and perverted that which was right, and it profit-
ed me not; he will deliver his soul from going in-
to the pit, and his life shall see the light.*

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Preached
on Ash-
wednes-
day. 1689.

THE great folly and perverseness of human nature is in nothing more apparent than in this, that when in all other things men are generally led and governed by their interests, and can hardly be imposed upon by any art, or persuaded by any solicitation, to act plainly contrary to it; yet in matter of their sin and duty, that is, in that which of all other is of greatest concernment to them, they have little

little or no regard to it ; but are so blinded and bewitched with “ the deceitfulness of sin,” as not to consider the infinite danger and disadvantage of it ; and at the same time to cast the commandments of God, and the consideration of their own happiness behind their backs.

And of this every sinner, when he comes to himself, and considers what he hath done, is abundantly convinced ; as appears by the confession and acknowledgment, which is here in the text put into the mouth of a true penitent ; “ I have sinned, and “ perverted that which was right, and it profited me “ not, &c.”

In which words here is a great blessing and benefit promised on God’s part, and condition required on our part.

First, The blessing or benefit promised on God’s part, which is deliverance from the ill consequences and punishment of sin ; “ he will deliver his soul “ from going into the pit, and his life shall see the “ light,” that is, he will deliver him from death and damnation. And though perhaps temporal death be here immediately intended, yet that is a type of our deliverance from eternal death ; which is expressly promised in the gospel.

Secondly, Here is a condition required on our part ; “ If any say, I have sinned, and perverted “ that which was right, and it profited me not.”

In which words there are contained,

I. A penitent confession of our sins to God ; for “ he looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned,” that is, make a penitent confession of his sin to God.

II. A true contrition for our sin, not only for fear of the pernicious consequences of sin, and the

punishment that will follow it, implied in these words, "and it profited me not," this is but a very imperfect contrition : but from a just sense of the evil nature of sin, and the fault and offence of it against God, that we have done contrary to right and our duty. "If any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right." Here you see that true and perfect contrition for our sins, is made a necessary condition of the blessing and benefit here promised, viz. deliverance from the punishment due to them.

III. Here is a description of the evil nature of sin, it is "a perverting of that which is right." Sin is a perverting of the constitution and appointment of God, and of the nature and order of things. God hath given man a law and rule to walk by, but "the foolishness of man perverteth his way." The great lines of our duty are plain and visible to all men; and if we would attend to the direction of our own minds, concerning good and evil, every man would be "a law to himself." "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good." That which is right and just and good is plain and obvious, and offers itself first to us; and whenever we sin, we go out of the right way that lies plain before us, and "turn aside into crooked paths." But when we do that which is right, we act agreeably to the design and frame of our beings, and comply with the true nature and order of things; we do what becomes us, and are what we ought to be: but sin perverts the nature of things, and puts them out of course; "I have sinned and perverted that which was right."

IV. You have here an acknowledgment of the mischievous and pernicious consequences of sin; "I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not." Which last words are a

μεωσις, in which much less is said than is meant and intended; "It profited me not," that is, it was so far from being of advantage, that the effects and consequences of it were very pernicious and destructive.

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And this is not only true as to the final issue, and event of an evil course in the other world ; but I shall endeavour to shew, that even in respect of this world, and the present life, the practice of some sins is plainly mischievous to the temporal interests of men ; that others are wholly unprofitable ; and that those which pretend to bring some benefit and advantage, will, when all accounts are cast up, and all circumstances duly weighed and considered, be found to do far otherwise.

First, I shall shew, that the practice of some vices is evidently mischievous and prejudicial to us, as to this world ; as all those vices which fall under the cognizance of human laws, and are punished by them: murder, theft, perjury, sedition, rebellion, and the like ; these cannot be denied to be of pernicious consequence to men, and therefore the great patrons of vice seldom plead for these, the inconvenience of them is so palpable, that some feel it, and all may see it every day.

But besides these, there are many other sorts of sin, which human laws either take no notice of, or do not so severely punish, which yet in their natural consequences are very pernicious to our present interest ; either they are a disturbance to our minds, or dangerous to our health, or ruinous to our estate, or hurtful to our reputation, or it may be at once prejudicial to us, in all, or most of these respects ; and these are the greatest temporal inconveniencies that men are liable to.

All irregular passions, as wrath, malice, envy,
19 B 2 impa-

impatience and revenge, are not only a disturbance to ourselves, but they naturally draw upon us hatred and contempt from others. Any one of these passions is enough to render a man uneasy to himself, and to make his conversation disgustful and troublesome to all that are about him; for all men naturally hate all those, who are of an envious, or malicious, or revengeful temper, and are apt to rise up and stand upon their guard against them. Anger and impatience are great deformities of the mind, and make a man look as ugly, as if he had a wry and distorted countenance; and these passions are apt to breed in others a secret contempt of us, and to bring our prudence into question, because they are signs of a weak and impotent mind, that either hath lost, or never had the government of itself.

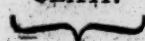
There are other vices, which are plainly pernicious to our health, and do naturally bring pains and diseases upon men; such are intemperance and lust: and though some may pretend to govern themselves, in the practice of these, with so much moderation and discretion, as to prevent the notorious bad consequences of them, yet there are very few or none that do so; this is seldom more than a speculation, and men that allow themselves in any lewd or intemperate course, will find it very hard to govern themselves in it; for after men have forfeited their innocence, and broke in upon their natural modesty, they are apt by degrees to grow profligate and desperate. If a man gives way but little to his own vicious inclinations, they will soon get head of him, and no man knows how far they will hurry him at last.

Besides, that the vices I am speaking of, intemperance and lust, have other great inconveniencies attending them, they expose men more frequently,
than

than most other vices, to occasions of quarrel, in which men often lose their own lives, or take away other mens, by which they fall under the danger of the law, and the stroke of publick justice; or if they escape that, (as too often they do) they cannot fly from their own consciences, which do commonly fill them with the horror and torment of such an action all their days; so pernicious are the usual consequences of these vices, of which we see sad instances every day.

Nor are these vices less hurtful to mens estates; for they are extremely expensive and wasteful, and usually make men careless of all their business and concernments, liable to be cheated by those, whom they are forced to trust with their affairs, because they will not mind them themselves, and to be abused by crafty men, who watch the opportunities of their folly and weakness, to draw them into foolish bargains. It is an old observation, that more men perish by intemperance, than by the sword; and I believe it is as true, that more estates are dissipated and wasted by these two riotous vices, than by all other accidents whatsoever.

And there is scarce any notorious vice, by which men do not greatly suffer in their reputation and good name, even when the times are worst and most degenerate; any wicked course, whether of debauchery or injustice, is a blemish to a man's credit, not only in the esteem of the sober and virtuous, but even of those who are loose and extravagant; for men are sooner brought to practise what is bad, than to approve of it, and do generally think all sin and wickedness to be a stain upon them, whatever in a swagging humour they may say to the contrary. A clear evidence of this is, that men do so studiously endeavour



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deavour to conceal their vices, and are so careful that as few as may be should be conscious to them, and are so confounded if they be discovered, and so out of all patience when they are upbraided with them; a plain acknowledgment, that these things are shameful in themselves, and whatever face men may put upon things, that they do inwardly and at the bottom of their hearts believe, that these practices are deservedly of bad reputation, and do, in the general opinion of mankind, leave a blot upon them.

Secondly, There are other sins, which though they are not usually attended with consequences so palpably mischievous, yet are plainly unprofitable, and bring no manner of advantage to men.

Of this sort is all kind of profaneness, and customary swearing in common conversation, there is neither profit nor pleasure in them. What doth the profane man get by his contempt of religion? He is neither more respected nor better trusted for this quality; but on the contrary, it is many times really to his prejudice, and brings a great odium upon him, not only from those who sincerely love religion, but from others also; though they are conscious to themselves, that they do not love religion as they ought, yet they have a veneration for it, and cannot endure that any one should speak slightly of it.

And it is as hard to imagine, where the pleasure of profaneness lies. Men cannot but at first have a great reluctancy in their minds against it, and must offer considerable violence to themselves, to bring themselves to it; and when it is grown more familiar, and their consciences are become more seared and insensible, yet whenever they are alone and serious, or when any affliction or calamity is upon them, they are full of fears and anguish, their guilt

stares

stares them in the face, and their consciences are raging and furious.

And as all kind of profaneness is unprofitable, so more especially customary swearing in ordinary conversation, upon every occasion of passion, or any other trivial cause, nay it may be without cause, out of mere habit and custom. Now what can possibly be imagined to be the profit or pleasure of this vice? sensual pleasure in it there can be none, because it is not founded in the temper of the body: a man may be naturally prone to anger or lust; but no man I think is born with a swearing constitution.

And there is as little profit as pleasure in it; for the common and trivial use of oaths makes them perfectly insignificant to their end, and is so far from giving credit to a man's word, that it rather weakens the reputation of it.

Thirdly, Those vices which pretend to be of advantage to us, when all accounts are cast up, and all circumstances duly considered, will be found to be quite otherwise. Some vices pretend to bring in profit, others to yield pleasure; but upon a thorough examination of the matter, these pretences will vanish and come to nothing.

The vices which pretend to be most profitable are covetousness and oppression, fraud and falsehood, and perfidiousness: but if we look well into them, we shall find that either they do not bring the advantages they pretend to bring; or that the inconveniences which attend them are as great or greater, than the advantages they bring; or else that the practice of the opposite virtues would be of much greater advantage to us.

1. Some of these vices do not bring the advantages they pretend to do. Covetousness may increase a
man's

man's estate, but it adds nothing to his happiness and contentment ; for though his estate grow never so much, his want is still as great as it was before, and his care and trouble continually greater ; so that so long as he continues covetous, the more rich, the less happy.

And then for fraud and falshood ; they are not of that real and lasting advantage, that cunning but short-sighted men are apt to imagine. Nothing is truer than that of Solomon, "the lying tongue is "but for a moment." A man can practise the arts of falshood and deceit but for a little while, before they will be discovered ; and when they are discovered, they are so far from being any advantage to him, that they turn to his prejudice, and the cunning man begins to be in a bad case, and he that was wont to over-reach others, is at last caught himself.

2. Several of these vices are attended with inconveniencies, as great or greater than the advantages they bring. If a man increase his estate by injustice and oppression, yet he loseth his reputation. Besides that all fraudulent and unjust courses are apt to entangle a man in a great many inconveniencies, and to expose him to troublesom suits, for the keeping of what he hath unjustly gotten ; it is very often seen, that what is gotten by injustice is spent in law ; and though it may be those whom he hath wronged never recover their right, yet first or last the unjust man is put to more trouble and vexation about it, than the thing is worth. This Solomon observes, Prov. xv. 16. "In the revenue of the wicked there is "trouble."

The perfidious man by betraying a friend or a trust, may perhaps make some present advantage ; but then by such a villainy he makes himself odious

to all mankind, and by this means, at one time or other, prevents himself of greater advantages which he might have had another way ; and perhaps at last is miserably crushed by those whom he betrayed, who, in the change and revolution of human affairs, may some time or other have the opportunity of being revenged. Or else,

3. The practice of the opposite virtues would be of far greater advantage to us.

Truth and fidelity are in common experience found to be a better and surer way of thriving, and more like to last and hold out, than fraud and falshood ; and as honesty is a surer way of raising an estate, so it brings along with it greater security of the quiet enjoyment of it. There is never any real occasion, and seldom any colour and pretence of bringing such a man into trouble ; for which reason Solomon says, " Better is the little which the righteous man hath, than great possessions without right : " because, though it be but little, yet it will wear like steel, and he is like to enjoy it quietly, and may increase it ; whereas the unjust man is continually in danger of losing what he hath gotten.

And if this be the case, it is very plain, that those vices which pretend to bring the greatest advantage, are really unprofitable ; and to these kind of vices the text seems to point more particularly ; " if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, &c. "

But perhaps though there be no profit in any sinful course, yet there may be some pleasure. That comes next to be examined ; and I doubt not to make it evident, that there is no such pleasure in sin, as can make it a reasonable temptation to any man to venture upon it. The vices which pretend to bring

the greatest pleasure, are lewdness, and intemperance, and revenge.

The two first of these are the highest pretenders to pleasure : but God knows, and the sinner himself knows, how thin and transitory this pleasure is, how much trouble attends it, and how many sighs and groans follow it, and whatever pleasure they may minister to the sense, they bring a great deal of anguish and perplexity to the mind ; so that the trouble which they cause, does more than countervail the pleasure which they bring : and they do not only disturb the mind, but they disease the body. How many are there, who for the gratifying of an inordinate lust, and for the incomprehensible pleasure of a drunken fit, have endured the violent burnings of a fever, or else have consumed the remainder of their days in languishing sickness and pain ?

And the reason of all this is plain, because all the pleasures of sin are violent, and forced, and unnatural, and therefore not like to continue ; they are founded in some disease and distemper of our minds, and therefore always end in pain and smart.

And as for revenge ; it is indeed a very eager and impatient desire : but so far surely from being a pleasure, that the very thoughts of it are extremely troublesom, and raise as great storms in the mind of a man, as any passion whatsoever : and I never heard of the pleasure of being in a storm ; it is pleasant indeed to be out of it, when others are in it. And when revenge hath satisfied itself, and laid it's enemy bleeding at it's foot, the man that executed it commonly repents himself the next moment, and would give all the world to undo what he hath done ; so that if there be any pleasure in revenge, it is so flitting and of so short a continuance, that

we know not where to fix it ; for there is nothing but tumult and rage before the execution of it, and after it nothing but remorse and horror ; so that if it be a pleasure, it is but of one moment's continuance, and lasts no longer than the act is a doing ; and what man in his wits would purchase so short a pleasure at so dear a price ? This is most certainly true, and if it were well considered, sufficient to convince any reasonable man of the unreasonableness of this passion.

Cain is a fearful instance of this kind ; who after he had drawn his brother into the field, and slain him there, how was he tormented with the guilt of what he had done, and forced to cry out, “ my punishment is greater than I can bear,” (or as some translations render the words) “ mine iniquity is greater than that it can be forgiven !” Gen. iv. 13. “ From thy face, (says he to God, in the anguish of his soul) “ from thy face shall I be hid, and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth ; and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall slay me, v. 14. Every one that findeth me,” how fearful did his guilt make him ! when probably there was then but one man in the world besides himself. And I may say of this sort of men, as St. Jude does of those in his time, Jude v. 11. “ Wo unto them, for they have gone in the way of Cain,” they are guilty of his crime, and his doom shall be theirs.

And here I cannot but take notice of a great evil that grows daily upon us, and therefore deserves with the greatest severity to be discountenanced and punished, I mean that of duels, than which what can be more unchristian ? And what can be more unreasonable, than for men upon deliberation, and after the heat of passion is over, to resolve to sheath their swords in one another's bowels, only for a hasty word ?

And which is yet more unreasonable, that because two men are angry, and have quarrelled with one another, and will fight it out, that therefore two more, who have no quarrel, no kind of displeasure against one another, must fight too, and kill one another if they can for no reason, and upon no provocation. These false rules of honour will not pass in another world in the highest and greatest court of honour, from whence there is no appeal.

I shall conclude this whole argument with that excellent saying of Cato, reported in A. Gellius, “*co-
gitate cum animis vestris, &c.*” “consider (says
he) with yourselves, if ye be at any trouble and
pain to do a good action, the trouble will be soon
over; but the pleasure and comfort of what ye
have done well, abides with you all your days:
but if to gratify yourselves, you do any thing
that is wicked, the pleasure will quickly vanish;
but the guilt of it will stick by you for ever.”

And is it not then much better to prevent all this trouble, by denying ourselves these sinful pleasures, which will follow us with guilt whilst we live, and fill us with horror and despair when we come to die?

I shall now make some reflections upon what has been delivered, and so conclude.

First, What hath been said upon this argument, ought particularly to move those who have so great a consideration of this present life, and the temporal happiness of it, that the practice of all virtues is a friend to their temporal, as well as eternal welfare, and all vice is an enemy to both.

Secondly, This likewise takes off all manner of excuse from sin and vice. It pretends not to serve the soul, and to profit our future happiness in another world; and if it be an enemy also to our present wel-

welfare in this world, what is there to be said for it?

Thirdly, (which I desire to insist a little longer upon) all the arguments which I have used, to convince men of the folly of a wicked course, are so many strong and unanswerable reasons for repentance; for when a man is convinced, that "he hath done foolishly, and to his own prejudice, that he hath sinned, " and that it profited him not," what can he do less, than to be heartily sorry for it, and ashamed of it, and resolved to do better for the future? Nothing surely is more reasonable than repentance; and yet how hard is it to bring men to it? Either men will mistake the nature of it, and not do it effectually; or they will delay it, and not do it in time.

I. Men mistake the nature of repentance; and there are two great mistakes about it.

1. Of those who make the great force and virtue of it to consist, not so much in the resolution of the penitent, as in the absolution of the priest. And this the church of Rome, in their doctrine concerning repentance, does. For their sacrament of penance (as they call it) they make to consist of two parts; the matter of it, which consists in these three acts of the penitent, confession, contrition, and satisfaction; and the form of it, which is the absolution of the priest, in which they make the main virtue and force of repentance to consist; *in quâ præcipue ipsius vis sita est*, are the very words of the council of Trent. And here is a wide difference betwixt us; for though the comfort of the penitent may in some case consist in the absolution of the priest, yet the virtue and efficacy of repentance does not at all consist in it, but wholly in the contrition and sincere resolution of the penitent, as the scripture every where declares: and to think otherwise, is of dangerous

dangerous consequence; because it encourageth men to hope for the benefit of repentance, that is, the pardon and forgiveness of their sins, without having truly repented. And indeed the council of Trent have so framed their doctrines in this point, that any one may see, that they did not matter how much they abated on the part of the penitent, provided the power of the priest be but advanced, and kept up in it's full height.

2. The other mistake is of those, who make repentance to consist in the bare resolution of amendment, though it never has it's effect; that is, though the sinner either do not what he resolved, or do it only for a fit, and during his present trouble and conviction.

There is one case indeed, and but one, wherein a resolution not brought to effect is available, and that is, when nothing hinders the performance and execution of it, but only want of time and opportunity for it; when the repentance is sincere, and the resolution real, but the man is cut off between the actual reformation which he intended, and which God, who sees things certainly in their causes, knows would have followed, if the man had lived to give demonstration of it. But this is nothing to those who have the opportunity to make good their resolution, and do not: for, because the resolution which would have been performed, had there been time and opportunity, is reckoned for a true repentance, and accepted of God as if it had been done; therefore the resolution which was not brought to effect when there was time and opportunity for it, hath not the nature of true repentance, nor will it be accepted of God.

I will add but one thing more upon this head, because

cause I doubt it is not always sufficiently considered ; and that is this, that a sincere resolution of a better course does imply a resolution of the means, as well as of the end ; he that is truly resolved against any sin, is likewise resolved against the occasions and temptations that would lead and draw him to it ; otherwise he hath taken up a rash and foolish resolution, which he is not like to keep, because he did not resolve upon that which was necessary to the keeping of it. So he that resolves upon any part of his duty, must likewise resolve upon the means which are necessary to the discharge and performance of it ; he that is resolved to be just in his dealing, and to pay his debts, must be diligent in his calling, and mind his business, because without this he cannot do the other ; for nothing can be more vain and fond, than for a man to pretend that he is resolved upon doing his duty, when he neglects any thing that is necessary to put him into a capacity, and to further him in the discharge of it. This is, as if a man should resolve to be well, and yet never take physick, or be careless in observing the rules which are prescribed in order to his health. So for a man to resolve against drunkenness, and yet to run himself upon the temptations which naturally lead to it, by frequenting the company of lewd and intemperate persons, this is, as if a man should resolve against the plague, and run into the pest-house. Whatever can reasonably move a man to be resolved upon any end, will, if this resolution be wise and honest, determine him as strongly to use the means which are proper and necessary to that end.

These are the common mistakes about this matter, which men are the more willing to run into, because they are loth to be brought to a true repentance ;

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ance ; the nature whereof is not difficult to be understood, (for nothing in the world is plainer ;) only men are always slow to understand what they have no mind to put in practice. But,

II. Besides these mistakes about repentance, there is another great miscarriage in this matter, and that is the delay of repentance ; men are loth to set about it, and therefore they put it upon their last hazard, and resolve then to huddle it up as well as they can: but this certainly is great folly, to be still making more work for repentance, because it is to create so much needless trouble and vexation to ourselves ; it is to go on still in playing a foolish part, in hopes to retrieve all by an after-game ; this is extremely dangerous, because we may certainly sin, but it is not certain we shall repent, our repentance may be prevented, and we may be cut off in our sins ; but if we should have space for it, repentance may in process of time grow an hundred times more difficult than it is at present.

But if it were much more certain, and more easy than it is, if it were nothing but a hearty sorrow and shame for our sins, and an asking God forgiveness for them, without being put to the trouble of reforming our wicked lives, yet this were great folly, to do those things which will certainly grieve us after we have done them, and put us to shame, and to ask forgiveness for them. It was well said of old Cato, *næ tu stultus es homuncio, qui malis veniam precari, quam non peccare* ; “ thou art a foolish man “ indeed, who chusest rather to ask forgiveness, “ than not to offend.”

At the best, repentance implies a fault ; it is an after-wisdom, which supposeth a man at first to have plaid the fool ; it is but the best end of a bad business ;

business ; a hard shift, and a desperate hazard, which a man that had acted prudently would never have been put to ; it is a plaister after we have dangerously wounded ourselves : but certainly it had been much wiser, to have prevented the danger of the wound, and the pain of curing it. A wise man would not make himself sick if he could, or if he were already so, would not make himself sicker, though he had the most effectual and infallible remedy in the world in his power : but this is not the case of a sinner, for repentance as well as faith is the gift of God.

Above all, let me caution you, not to put off this great and necessary work, to the most unreasonable time of all other, the time of sickness and death, upon a fond presumption, that you can be reconciled to God when you please, and exercise such a repentance as will make your peace with him at any time.

I am heartily afraid, that a very great part of mankind do miscarry upon this confidence, and are swallowed up in the gulf of eternal perdition, with this plank in their arms. The common custom is (and I fear it is too common) when the physician hath given over his patient, then, and not till then, to send for the minister ; not so much to enquire into the man's condition, and to give him suitable advice, as to minister comfort, and to speak peace to him at a venture.

But let me tell you, that herein you put an extreme difficult task upon us, in expecting that we should pour wine and oil into the wound before it be searched, and speak smooth and comfortable things to a man, that is but just brought to a sense of the long course of a lewd and wicked life, impenitently continued in. Alas ! what comfort can we give to men in such a case ? We are loth to drive them to de-

The unprofitableness of sin in this life,

spair ; and yet we must not destroy them by presumption ; pity and good nature do strongly tempt us to make the best of their case, and to give them all the little hopes, which with any kind of reason we can, and God knows it is but very little that we can give to such persons upon good ground ; for it all depends upon the degree and sincerity of their repentance, which God only knows, and we can but guess at. We can easily tell them what they ought to have done, and what they should do if they were to live longer, and what is the best that they can do in those straits into which they have brought themselves, viz. to exercise as deep a sorrow and repentance for their sins as is possible, and to cry mightily to God for mercy, in and through the merit of our blessed SAVIOUR. But how far this will be available in these circumstances we cannot tell ; because we do not know, whether if the man had lived longer, this repentance and these resolutions which he now declares of a better course, would have been good.

And after all is done that can be done in so short a time, and in such circumstances of confusion and disorder, as commonly attend dying persons, I doubt the result of all will be this ; that there is much more ground of fear than hope concerning them ; nay perhaps, while we are pressing the dying sinner to repentance, and he is bungling about it, he expires in great doubt and perplexity of mind what will become of him ; or if his eyes be closed with more comfortable hopes of his condition, the next time he opens them again, he may find his fearful mistake, like the rich man in the parable, who when he was “ in hell, lift up his eyes being in “ torment.”

This is a very dismal and melancholy consideration,
2. and

and commands all men presently to repent, and not to put off the main work of their lives to the end of them, and the time of sickness and old age. Let us not offer up a carcass to God instead of a living and acceptable sacrifice: but let us turn to God, in the days of our health and strength, "before the
" evil days come, and the years draw nigh, of which
" we shall say we have no pleasure in them; before
" the sun and the moon and the stars be darkned;" as Solomon elegantly expresseth it, Eccles. xii. 1, 2. before all the comforts of life be gone, before our faculties be all ceased and spent, before our understandings be too weak, and our wills too strong; our understandings be too weak for consideration, and the deliberate exercise of repentance, and our wills too strong and stiff to be bent and bowed to it.

Let us not deceive ourselves, heaven is not an hospital made to receive all sick and aged persons, that can but put up a faint request to be admitted there; no, no, they are never like to see the kingdom of God, who instead of seeking it in the first place, make it their last refuge and retreat; and when they find the sentence of death upon them, only to avoid present execution, do bethink themselves of getting to heaven, and since there is no other remedy, are contented to petition the great king and judge of the world, that they may be transported thither.

Upon all these considerations, let us use no delay in a matter of such mighty consequence to our eternal happiness, but let the counsel which was given to Nebuchadnezzar be acceptable to us; let us "break
" off our sins by righteousness, and our iniquities
" by shewing mercy to the poor; if so be it may
" be a lengthening of our tranquillity." Repentance

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and alms do well together; "let us break off our
 " sins by righteousness, and our iniquities by shew-
 " ing mercy to the poor;" especially upon this
 great occasion, which his majesty's great goodness
 to those distressed strangers, that have taken sanctua-
 ry among us, hath lately presented us withal, "re-
 " membring that we also are in the body," and
 liable to the like sufferings; and considering on the
 one hand, that gracious promise of our LORD,
 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive
 " mercy;" and on the other hand, that terrible
 threatening in St. James, "He shall have judg-
 " ment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy."

To conclude, from all that hath been said, let us
 take up a present resolution of a better course, and
 enter immediately upon it, "to day whilst it is call-
 " ed to day, lest any of you be hardened through
 " the deceitfulness of sin. O that men were wise,
 " that they understood this, that they would consi-
 " der their latter end! And grant we beseech thee
 " Almighty God, that we may all know and do,
 " in this our day, the things which belong to our
 " peace, for thy mercy's sake in JESUS CHRIST,
 " to whom with thee, O Father, and the Holy
 " Ghost, be all honour and glory now and for ever."
 Amen.

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The shamefulnefs of fin, an argument
for repentance.

R O M. vi. 21, 22.

What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

TH E R E are two passions which do always in some degree or other accompany a true repentance, viz. Sorrow and shame for our sins; because these are necessary to engage men to a resolution of making that change wherein repentance does consist: for till we are heartily sorry for what we have done, and ashamed of the evil of it, it is not likely that we should ever come to a firm and steady purpose of forsaking our evil ways, and betaking ourselves to a better course.

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The first
sermon on
this text.

And these two passions of sorrow and shame for our sins, were wont anciently to be signified by those outward expressions of humiliation and repentance, which we find so frequently mentioned in scripture, of “being clothed in sackcloth” as a testimony of our sorrow and mourning for our sins, and of “being sprinkled upon the head, and covered over with filth and dirt, with dust and ashes,” in token of our shame and confusion of face for all our iniquities and transgressions. Hence are those expressions in scripture of “repenting in sackcloth and ashes, of lying down in our shame, and being covered with
“confusion,”

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“ confusion,” in token of their great sorrow and shame for the manifold and heinous sins, which they had been guilty of.

Of the former of these, viz. trouble and sorrow for our sins, I have very lately * treated ; and of the latter, I intend now by God’s assistance to speak, viz. shame for our sins, and that from these words which I have recited to you ; “ what fruit had ye then in “ those things ?” &c. In which words the apostle makes a comparison between an holy and virtuous, and a sinful and vicious course of life, and sets before us a perfect enumeration of the manifest inconveniencies of the one, and the manifold advantages of the other.

First, The manifest inconveniencies of a vicious and sinful course ; and the apostle mentions these three.

I. It is unprofitable, it brings no manner of present benefit and advantage to us, if all things be rightly calculated and considered. “ What fruit had ye “ then in those things ?” Then (i. e.) at the time when you committed those sins, had you any present advantage by them ? No, certainly ; but quite contrary.

II. The reflection upon our sins afterwards is cause of shame and confusion to us ; “ What fruit “ had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now “ ashamed ?”

III. The final issue and consequence of these things is very dismal and miserable ; “ the end of those “ things is death.” Let us put these things together, and see what they amount to : No fruit then when ye did these things, and shame now when ye come afterwards to reflect upon them, and death and misery at the last.

Secondly,

Secondly, Here is likewise on the other hand represented to us the manifold benefits of an holy and virtuous life. And that upon these two accounts.

I. Of the present benefit of it, which the apostle calls here, fruit; “ye have your fruit unto holiness.”

II. In respect of the future reward of it; “and the end everlasting life.” Here is a considerable earnest in hand, and a mighty recompence afterwards, infinitely beyond the proportion of our best actions and services, both in respect of the greatness and the duration of it, “everlasting life;” for a few transient and very imperfect actions of obedience, a perfect and immutable and endless state of happiness. I shall begin with the

First of the two general heads, viz. the manifest inconveniencies of a sinful and vicious course; and the apostle I told you in the text takes notice of three.

I. It is unprofitable, and if all things be rightly calculated and considered, it brings no manner of present advantage and benefit to us. “What fruit had ye then in those things?” Then (i. e.) when ye committed those sins, had you any present advantage by them? No, certainly, quite contrary; as if the apostle had said, if you seriously reflect upon your former course of impiety and sin, wherein you have continued so long, you cannot but acknowledge that it brought no manner of advantage to you; and when all accounts are truly cast up, you must, if you will confess the truth, own that you were in no sort gainers by it: For the words are *αμειωσις*, and the apostle plainly intends more than he expresseth, “What fruit had ye then in those things?” (i. e.) the wicked course which ye formerly lived in, was so far from being any ways beneficial to you, that it was on the contrary upon all accounts extremely to your prejudice and disadvantage. And

And this is not only true in respect of the final issue and consequence of a sinful and vicious course of life, that no man is a gainer by it at the long run; and if we take into our consideration another world, and the dreadful and endless misery which a wicked and impenitent life will then plunge men into (which in the farther handling of this text will at large be spoken to, being the last of the three particulars under this first general head :) But it is true likewise, even in respect of this world, and with regard only to this present and temporal life, without looking so far as the future recompence and punishment of sin in another world.

And this would plainly appear, by an induction of these three particulars.

1. It is evident that some sins are plainly mischievous to the temporal interest of men, as tending either to the disturbance of their minds, or the endangering of their healths and lives, or to the prejudice of their estates, or the blasting of them in their reputation and good name.

2. That there are other sins, which though they are not so visibly burdened and attended with mischievous consequences, yet they are plainly unprofitable, and bring no manner of real advantage to men, either in respect of gain or pleasure; such are the sins of profaneness, and customary swearing in common conversation.

3. That even those sins and vices, which make the fairest pretence to be of advantage to us, when all accounts are cast up, and all circumstances duly weighed and considered, will be found to be but pretenders, and in no degree able to perform and make good what they so largely promise before hand, when they tempt us to the commission of them. There

are some vices, which pretend to bring in great profit, and tempt worldly-minded men, whose minds are disposed to catch at that bait; such are the sins of covetousness and oppression, of fraud and falshood and perfidiousness. And there are others which pretend to bring pleasure along with them, which is almost an irresistible temptation to voluptuous and sensual men; such are the sins of revenge, and intemperance, and lust. But upon a particular examination of each of these, it will evidently appear, that there is no such profit or pleasure in any of these vices, as can be a reasonable temptation to any man to fall in love with them, and to engage in the commission and practice of them. But I shall not now inlarge upon any of these, having lately discoursed upon them from another text. I shall therefore proceed to the

II. Inconvenience which I mentioned of a sinful and vicious course, viz. that the reflection upon our sins afterwards, is cause of great shame and confusion to us. “What fruit had you then in those things, “whereof you are now ashamed?” And this is a very proper argument for this season; because the passion of shame, as it is a natural and usual consequent of sin, so it is a disposition necessarily required to a true repentance.

Preached
in Lent.

Most men when they commit a known fault are apt to be ashamed, and ready to blush whenever they are put in mind of it, and charged with it. Some persons indeed have gone so far in sin, and have waded so deep in a vicious course, as to be confirmed and hardened in their wickedness to that degree as to be past all shame, and almost all sense of their faults; especially in regard of the more common and ordinary vices, which are in vogue and fashion, and in the commission

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whereof they are countenanced and encouraged by company and example, such were those of whom the prophet speaks, Jer. vi. 15. "Were they ashamed, " when they had committed abomination? nay, " they were not ashamed, neither could they blush."

But yet even these persons, when they come to be sensible of their guilt, so as to be brought to repentance, they cannot then but be ashamed of what they have done. For what face soever men may set upon their vices, sin is shameful in itself, and so apt to fill men with "confusion of face," when they seriously reflect upon it, that they cannot harden their foreheads against all sense of shame. And whatever men may declare to the contrary, this is tacitly acknowledged by the generality of men, in that they are so solicitous and careful to conceal their faults from the eyes of others, and to keep them as secret as they can; and whenever they are discovered and laid open, 'tis matter of great trouble and confusion to them; and if any one happen to upbraid and twit them with their miscarriages of any kind, they cannot bear with patience to hear of them.

There are indeed some few such prodigies and monsters of men, as are able after great struglings with their consciences, to force themselves to boast impudently of their wickedness, and "to glory in " their shame;" not because they do really and inwardly believe their vices to be an honour and glory to them, but because conscious to themselves that they have done shameful things, and believing that others know it, they put on "a whore's forehead," and think to prevent the upbraiding of others, by owning what they have done, and seeming to glory in it: but yet for all that, these persons, if they would confess the truth, do feel some confusion in them.

themselves, and they are inwardly sensible of the infamy and reproach of such actions, for all they would seem to the world to bear it out so well: For when all is done, there is a wide difference between the impudence of a criminal, and the confidence and assurance of a clear conscience, that is fully satisfied of it's own innocence and integrity. The conscientious man is not ashamed of any thing that he hath done: but the impudent sinner only seems not to be so, but all the while feels a great deal of confusion in his own mind. The one is sensible and satisfied that there is no cause for shame: the other is conscious to himself that there is cause, but he offers violence to himself, and suppresses all he can the sense and shew of it, and will needs face down the world, that he hath no guilt and regret in his own mind for any thing that he hath done.

Now that sin is truly matter of shame, will be very evident, if we consider these two things.

First, If we consider the nature of this passion of shame.

Secondly, If we consider what there is in sin, which gives real ground and occasion for it.

First, For the nature of this passion. Shame is the trouble or confusion of mind, occasioned by something that tends to our disgrace and dishonour, to our infamy and reproach. Now there is nothing truly and really matter of shame and reproach to us, but what we ourselves have done, or have been some way or other accessory to the doing of, by our own fault or neglect, and by consequence what it was in our power and choice not to have done: For no man is ashamed of what he is sure he could not help. Necessity, unless it be wilful and contracted, and happens through some precedent occasion and

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CLXIII. shame.

And nothing likewise is matter of shame, but something which we ought not to do, which misbecomes us, and is below the dignity and perfection of our nature, and is against some duty and obligation that is upon us to the contrary; and consequently is a reproach to our reason and understanding, a reflection upon our prudence and discretion, and at first sight hath an appearance of ruggedness and deformity.

And all actions of this nature do receive several aggravations, with respect to the persons against whom, and in whose presence, and under whose eye and knowledge these shameful things are done. Now I shall shew in the

Second place, That sin contains in it whatsoever is justly accounted infamous, together with all the aggravations of shame and reproach that can be imagined. And this will appear by considering sin and vice in these two respects;

I. In relation to ourselves.

II. In respect to God, against whom, and in whose sight it is committed.

I. In relation to ourselves, there are these four things which make sin and vice to be very shameful.

1. The natural ruggedness and deformity of it.
2. That it is so great a dishonour to our nature, and to the dignity and excellency of our being.
3. That it is so great a reproach to our reason and understanding, and so foul a reflection upon our prudence and discretion.

4. That it is our own voluntary act and choice.

Every one of these considerations render it very shameful, and all of them together ought to fill the
sinner

finer with "confusion of face." I shall speak to them severally.

1. The natural ruggedness and deformity of sin and vice render it very shameful. Men are apt to be ashamed of any thing in them, or belonging to them, that looks ugly and monstrous, and therefore they endeavour with great care and art to conceal and dissemble their deformity in any kind. How strangely do we see men concerned, with all their diligence and skill, to cover and palliate any defect or deformity in their bodies; an ill face, if they could, however a foul and bad complexion, or blind or squinting eye, a crooked body or limb, or whatever is ill-favoured or monstrous. Now in regard of our souls and better part, sin hath all the monstrousness and deformity in it, which we can imagine in the body, and much more; and it is as hard to be covered from the eye of discerning men, as the deformity of the body is; but impossible to be concealed from the eye of God, to whom "darkness" and light," secret and open are all one. But then the moral defects and deformities of the mind have this advantage above the natural defects and deformities of the body, that the former are possible to be cured by the grace of God, in conjunction with our own care and endeavour: Whereas no diligence or skill can ever help or remove many of the natural defects and deformities of the body.

Sin is the blindness of our minds, the perverseness and crookedness of our wills, and the monstrous irregularity and disorder of our affections and appetites; it is the mis-placing of our powers and faculties, the setting of our wills and passions above our reason; all which is ugly and unnatural, and, if we were truly sensible of it, matter of great shame and reproach to us.

There

There is hardly any vice, but at first sight hath an odious and ugly appearance to a well disciplined and innocent mind, that hath never had any acquaintance with it. And however familiarity and custom may abate the sense of it's deformity, yet it is as it was before, and the change that is made in us does not alter the nature of the thing. Drunkenness and furious passion, pride and falshood, covetousness and cruelty, are odious, and matter of shame, in the sincere and uncorrupted opinion of all mankind. And though a man, by the frequent practice of any of these vices, and a long familiarity with them, may not be so sensible of the deformity of them in himself, yet he quickly discerns the ugliness of them in others, whenever they come in his way, and could with salt and sharpness enough upbraid those whom he sees guilty of them, but that he is inwardly conscious, that the reproach may be so easily returned, and thrown back upon himself. However this is a natural acknowledgment of the deformity and shamefulness of sin and vice.

2. They are likewise shameful, because they are so great a dishonour to our nature, and to the dignity and excellency of our being. We go below ourselves, and act beneath the dignity of our nature, when we do any thing contrary to the rules and laws of it, or to the revealed will of God; because these are the bounds and limits which God and nature hath set to human actions; and are the measures of our duty, i. e. what is fit and becoming for us to do, and what not. So that all sin and vice is base and unworthy, and beneath the dignity of our nature; it argues a corrupt and diseased constitution and habit of mind, a crooked and perverse disposition of will, and a sordid and mean temper of spirit.

And therefore the scripture doth frequently represent a state of sin and wickedness, by that which is accounted the basest and meanest condition among men, by a state of servitude and slavery, especially if it had been our choice, or the evident and necessary consequence of our wilful fault : for we do as bad as chuse it, when we wilfully bring it upon ourselves. So that to be a sinner, is to be a slave to some vile lust, appetite, or passion, to some unnatural or irregular desire ; it is to sell ourselves into bondage, and to part with one of the most valuable things in the world, our liberty, upon low and unworthy terms. Such a state and condition does unavoidably debase and debauch our minds, and break the force and firmness of our spirits, and robs us, as Dalilah did Sampson, of our strength and courage, of our resolution and constancy ; so that men have not the heart left to design and endeavour in good earnest their own rescue out of this mean and miserable estate, into which by their own folly and fault they have brought themselves.

When men are engaged into a custom of sinning, and have habituated themselves to any vicious course, how do they betray their weakness and want of resolution, by being at the beck of every foolish lust, and by suffering themselves to be commanded and hurried away by every unruly appetite and passion, to do things which they know to be greatly to their harm and prejudice, and which they are convinced are mean and sordid things, and such as they are ashamed that any wise man should see them doing ! and there is no greater argument of a pitiful and degenerate spirit, than to commit such things as a man would blush to be surprized in, and would be mightily troubled to hear of afterwards. And which is more,

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more, after he hath been convinced by manifold experience, that they are a shame and disgrace to him, and make him to hang down his head, and let fall his countenance, whenever he is in better company than himself; yet after this to go and do the same things again, which he is sensible are so shameful, and to be so impotent, and to have so little command of himself, as not to be able to free himself from this bondage, nor the heart to pray to God that by his grace he would enable him thereto.

And that sin is of this shameful nature, is evident, in that the greatest part of sinners take so much care and pains to hide their vices from the sight and notice of men, and to this purpose chuse darkness and secret places of retirement to commit their sins in. The apostle takes notice, that thus much modesty was left even in a very wicked and degenerate age, 1 Thes. v. 7. "They that be drunk (says he) are drunk in the night." Now all this is a plain acknowledgment, that sin is a spurious and degenerate thing, that it misbecomes human nature, and is below the dignity of a reasonable creature: otherwise why should men be so solicitous and concerned to cover their faults from the sight of others? If they are not ashamed of them, why do they not bring them into the broad light, and shew them openly, if they think they will endure it?

So true is that observation which Plato makes, that though a man were sure that God would forgive his sins, and that men should never know them, yet there is that baseness in sin, that a wise man, that considers what it is, would blush to himself alone to be guilty of it; and though he were not afraid of the punishment, would be ashamed of the turpitude and deformity of it.

Did but a man consider seriously with himself, how mean and unmanly it is for a man to be drunk ; and what an apish and ridiculous thing he renders himself to all sober men that behold him, and with what contempt and scorn they entertain such a sight ; and how brutish it is to wallow in any unlawful lust, and how much a man descends and stoops beneath himself ; what shameful fear and cowardice he betrays when he is frightened to tell a lie out of fear, or tempted thereto for some little advantage ; and yet is so inconsistent with himself, as to have, or to pretend to have the courage to fight any man, that shall tell him so sawcy a truth, as that he told a lie.

Would but a man think before-hand, how unworthy, and how unequal a thing it is to defraud or cheat his brother, or to do any thing to another man, which he would be loth in the like case that he should do to him ; how base a thing it is, for a man to be perfidious and false to his promise or trust ; how monstrous to be unthankful to one that hath highly obliged him, and every way and upon all occasions deserved well at his hands ; and so I might instance in all other sorts of sins ; I say, he that considers this well and wisely, though there were no law against sin, and (if it were a possible case, and fit to be supposed) though there were no such being as God in the world, to call him to account and punish him for it, yet out of mere generosity and greatness of mind, out of pure respect to himself, and the dignity and rank of his being, and of his order in the world, out of very reverence to human nature, and the inward persuasion of his own mind, (however he came by that persuasion) concerning the indecency and deformity and shamefulnefs of the thing ; I say, for these reasons, if there were no other, a man would strive with

himself, with all his might, to refrain from sin and vice, and not only blush, but abhor to think of doing a wicked action.

3. Sin will yet farther appear shameful, in that it is so great a reproach to our understandings and reasons, and so foul a blot upon our prudence and discretion. *Omnis peccans aut ignorans est, aut incogitans*, is a saying, I think, of one of the school-men; (as one would guess by the Latin of it) “Every sinner” “is either an ignorant, or an inconsiderate person.” Either men do not understand what they do, when they commit sin; or if they do know, they do not actually attend to, and consider what they know. Either they are habitually or actually ignorant of what they do; for sin and consideration cannot dwell together; it is so very unreasonable and absurd a thing, that it requires either gross ignorance, or stupid inadvertency, to make a man capable of committing it. Whenever a man sins, he must either be destitute of reason, or must lay it aside or asleep for the time, and so suffer himself to be hurried away, and to act brutishly, as if he had no understanding.

Did but men attentively consider what it is to offend God, and to break the laws of that great law-giver, who “is able to save or to destroy,” they would discern so many invincible objections against the thing, and would be filled with such strong fears and jealousies of the fatal issue and event of it, that they would not dare to venture upon it. And therefore we find the scripture so frequently resolving the wickedness of men into their ignorance and inconsiderateness, Psa. xiv. 4. “Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge?” intimating that by their actions one would judge so. And the same account

God

GOD himself also gives elsewhere of the frequent disobedience and rebellion of the people of Israel, Deut.

xxxii. 28, 29. " They are a nation void of coun-

" sel, neither is there any understanding in them.

" Oh ! that they were wise, that they understood

" this, that they would consider their latter end !"

Knowledge and consideration would cure a great part of the wickedness that is in the world ; men would not commit sin with so much greediness, would they but take time to consider and bethink themselves what they do.

Have we not reason then to be ashamed of sin, which casts such a reproach of ignorance and rashness upon us ? And of imprudence likewise and indiscretion ? Since nothing can be more directly and plainly against our greatest and best interest both of body and soul, both here and hereafter, both now and to all eternity. And there is nothing that men are more ashamed of, than to be guilty of so great an imprudence, as to act clearly against their own interest, to which sin is the most plainly cross and contrary, that it is possible for any thing to be. No man can engage and continue in a sinful course, without being so far abused and infatuated, as to be contented to part with everlasting happiness, and to be undone and miserable for ever ; none but he that can persuade himself against all the reason and sense of mankind, that there is pleasure enough in the transient acts of sin, to make amends for eternal sorrow, and shame, and suffering. And can such a thought as this enter into the heart of a considerate man ? Epicurus was so wise, as to conclude against all pleasures that would give a man more trouble and disturbance afterwards ; against all pleasures that had pain and grief consequent upon them : and he forbids

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bids his wife man to taste of them, or to meddle with them ; and had he believed any thing of a future state, he must, according to his principle, have pronounced it the greatest folly that could be, for any man to purchase the pleasures and happiness of a few years, at the dear rate of eternal misery and torment. So that if it be a disgrace to a man to act imprudently, and to do things plainly against his interest, then vice is the greatest reproach that is possible.

The fourth and last consideration, which renders sin so shameful to us, is, that it is our own voluntary act and choice. We chuse this disgrace, and willingly bring this reproach upon ourselves. We pity an idiot, and one that is naturally destitute of understanding, or one that loseth the use of his reason by a disease or other inevitable accident : but every one despiseth him who besots himself, and plays the fool out of carelessness and a gross neglect of himself. And this is the case of the sinner ; there is no man that sinneth, but because he is wanting to himself ; he might be wiser and do better, and will not ; but he chuses his own devices, and voluntarily runs himself upon those inconveniencies, which it was in his power to have avoided.

Not but that I do heartily own and lament the great corruption and degeneracy of our nature, and the strong propensions which appear so early in us to that which is evil : but God hath provided a remedy and cure for all this : For since “ the grace of God “ which brings salvation unto all men hath appeared,” under the influence and through the assistance of that grace, which is offered to them by the gospel, men may “ deny ungodliness and worldly “ lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly “ in this present world.” For I make no doubt,
but

but since God has entered into a new covenant of grace with mankind, and offered new terms of life and salvation to us ; I say, I doubt not, but his grace is ready at hand, to enable us to perform all those conditions which he requires of us, if we be not wanting to ourselves.

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There was a way of salvation established, before the gospel was clearly revealed to the world ; and they who under that dispensation, whether Jews or Gentiles, sincerely endeavoured to do the will of God, so far as they knew it, were not utterly destitute of divine grace and assistance : but now there is a more plentiful effusion of God's grace and holy spirit ; so that whoever under the gospel sins deliberately, sins wilfully, and is wicked, not for want of power but of will to do otherwise. And this is that which makes sin so shameful a thing, and so very reproachful to us, that we destroy ourselves by our own folly and neglect of ourselves, and become miserable by our own choice, and when the grace of God hath put it into our power to be wise and to be happy.

I should now have proceeded to the second thing I proposed, which was to consider sin in relation to God, and to shew that it is no less shameful in that respect, than I have shewn it to be with regard to ourselves : but this I shall refer to another opportunity.

S E R M O N CLXIV.

The shamefulness of sin, an argument
for repentance.

R O M. vi. 21, 22.

What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to GOD, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

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The second
sermon on
this text.

IN these words the apostle makes a comparison, between an holy and virtuous, and a sinful and vicious course of life, and sets before us a perfect enumeration of the manifold inconveniencies of the one, and the manifold advantages of the other.

I began with the first of these, viz. to shew the manifest inconveniencies of a sinful and vicious course. I am upon the second inconvenience of a sinful course, viz. that the reflection upon it afterwards is cause of great shame and "confusion of face" to us; and that

First, In relation to ourselves. Which I have dispatched, and proceed now in the

Second place, To consider sin in respect of God, against whom, and in whose sight and presence it is committed; and upon examination it will appear to be no less shameful in this respect than the other.

There are some persons before whom we are more apt to be ashamed and blush, than before others; as those whom we reverence, those to whom we are greatly obliged, and those who are clear of those faults

faults which we are guilty of ; and those who hate or greatly dislike what we do ; especially if they be present with us, and in our company ; if they stand by us, and observe, and take notice of what we do, and are likely to publish our folly and make it known, and have authority and power to punish us for our faults ; we are ashamed to have done any thing that is vile and unworthy before such persons. Now to render sin the more shameful, GOD may be considered by us under all these notions, and in all these respects.

1. Whenever we commit any sin, we do it before him, in his presence, and under his eye and knowledge, to whom of all persons in the world we ought to pay the most profound reverence. I remember Seneca somewhere says ; that “ there are some persons, *quorum interventu periti quoque homines virtia supprimerent*, that they are so awful and so generally revered for the eminency of their virtues, that even the most profligate and impudent sinners will endeavour to suppress their vices, and refrain from any thing that is notoriously bad, and uncomely, whilst such persons stand by them, and are in presence.” Such an one was Cato among the Romans. The people of Rome had such a regard and reverence for him, that if he appeared, they would not begin or continue their usual sports, till he was withdrawn from the theatre, thinking them too light to be acted before a person of his gravity and virtue: and if they were so much awed by the presence of a wise and virtuous man, that they were ashamed to do any thing that was unseemly before him ; how much more should the presence of the holy GOD, who is “ of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” make us blush to do
any

any thing that is lewd and vile in his sight, and fill us with shame and “confusion of face” at the thoughts of it? Now whenever we commit any sin, God looks upon us; and he alone is an ample theatre indeed. That he observes what we do, ought to be more to us, than if the eyes of all the world besides were gazing upon us.

2. He likewise is incomparably our greatest benefactor, and there is no person in the world, to whom in any degree we stand so much obliged, as to him; and from whom we can expect and hope for so much good, as from him; the consideration whereof must make us ashamed, so often as we consider, and are conscious to ourselves, that we have done any thing that is grievous and displeasing to him.

We are wont to have a peculiar reverence for those to whom we are exceedingly beholden, and to be much ashamed to do any thing before them, which may signify disrespect, and much more enmity against them; because this would be horrible ingratitude, one of the most odious and shameful of all vices. And is there any one to whom we can stand more obliged, than to him that made us, than to the author and founder of our beings, and the great patron and preserver of our lives; and can there then be any before whom, and against whom we should be more ashamed to offend? When the prodigal in the parable would set forth the shamefulness of his miscarriage, he aggravates it from hence, that he had offended against and before one to whom he had been so infinitely obliged: “Father, says he, “I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight.”

3. We are ashamed likewise to be guilty of any fault or crime before those persons who are clear of it, or of any thing of the like nature themselves.

Men

Men are not apt to be ashamed before those who are their fellow-criminals, and involved with them in the same guilt, because they do not stand in awe of them, nor can have any reverence for them. Those, who are equally guilty, must bear with one another. We are not apt to fear the censures and reproofs of those, who are as bad as ourselves; but we are ashamed to do a foul and unworthy action, before those who are innocent and free from the same, or the like sins and vices which we are guilty of.

Now whenever we commit any sin, it is in the presence of the holy God, who hath no part with us in our crimes, whose nature is removed at the farthest distance from sin, and is as contrary to it as can be. "There is no iniquity with the LORD our God." And therefore of all persons in the world we should blush to be guilty of it before him.

4. We are apt also to be ashamed to do any thing before those who dislike and detest what we do. To do a wicked action before those who are not offended at it, or perhaps take pleasure in it, is no such matter of shame to us. Now of all others, God is the greatest hater of sin, and the most perfect enemy to it in the whole world. Hab. i. 13. "Thou art of purer eyes, than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity," i. e. with patience, and without an infinite hatred and abhorrence of it. Such is the unspotted purity and perfection of the divine nature, that it is not possible that God should give the least countenance to any thing that is evil. Psal. v. 4, 5. "Thou art not a God," says David there to him, "that hast pleasure in iniquity, neither shall evil dwell with thee: The wicked shall not stand in thy sight; thou hatest all workers of iniquity."

5. We are ashamed likewise to do any thing that is evil and unseemly before those, who we are afraid will publish our faults to others, and will make known and expose the folly of them. Now whenever we sin, it is before him who will most certainly one day bring all our works of darkness into the open light, and expose all our secret deeds of dishonesty upon the publick stage of the world, and make all the vilest of our actions known, and lay them open, with all the shameful circumstances of them, before men and angels, to our everlasting shame and confusion. This is the meaning of that proverbial speech, so often used by our SAVIOUR, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be made manifest." All the sins which we now commit with so much caution, in secret and dark retirements, shall in that great day of revelation, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, be set in open view, and in so full and strong a light, that all the world shall see them; and that which was plotted and contrived in so much secrecy, and hardly whispered in this world, shall then "be proclaimed aloud," and as it were "upon the house tops."

6. And lastly, We are ashamed and afraid to commit a fault before those, who we believe will call us to an account for it, and punish us severely. A man may suffer innocently and for a good cause; but all suffering in that case is by wise and good men esteemed honourable and glorious, and though we are condemned by men, we are acquitted in our own consciences: But that which is properly called punishment is always attended with infamy and reproach; because it always supposeth some fault and crime, as the ground and reason of it. Hence it is

that in this world men are not only afraid, but ashamed to commit any fault before those, who they think have authority and power to punish it. He is an impudent villain indeed, that will venture to cut a purse in the presence of the judge.

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Now whenever we commit any wickedness, we do it under the eye of the great Judge of the world, who stedfastly beholds us, and whose omnipotent justice stands by us ready armed and charged for our destruction, and can in a moment cut us off. Every sin that we are guilty of, in thought, word or deed, is all in the presence of the holy, and just, and powerful God; whose power enables him, and whose holiness and justice will effectually engage him, one time or other, if a timely repentance doth not prevent it, to inflict a terrible punishment upon all the workers of iniquity.

You see then by all that hath been said upon this argument, how shameful a thing sin is, and what "confusion of face" the reflection upon our wicked lives ought to cause in all of us. "What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?" If ever we be brought to true repentance for our sins, it cannot but be matter of great shame to us.

We find in scripture that shame doth continually accompany repentance, and is inseparable from it. This is one mark and character of a true penitent, that he is ashamed of what he hath done. Thus Ezra, when he makes confession of the sins of the people, he testifies and declares his shame for what they had done; "I said, O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up mine eyes to thee my God; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespasses are grown up to the

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“ heavens,” Ezra ix. 6. And may not we of this nation at this day take these words unto ourselves, considering to what a strange height our sins are grown, and how iniquity abounds among us? So likewise the prophet Jeremiah, when he would express the repentance of the people of Israel, Jer. iii. 25. “ We lye down (says he) in our shame, and “ our confusion covereth us, because we have sinned “ against the LORD our GOD.” In like manner the prophet Daniel, after he had in the name of the people made an humble acknowledgment of their manifold and great sins, he takes shame to himself and them, for them. Dan. ix. 5. “ We have sinned, says he, and have committed iniquity, and “ have done wickedly, and have rebelled in departing from thy precepts, and from thy judgments. “ O LORD, righteousness belongeth to thee; but “ unto us confusion of face, as at this day; to the “ men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are “ far off, through all the countries whither thou hast “ driven them, because of their trespass, which they “ have trespassed against thee: O LORD! to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our “ princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.” By which we may judge, how considerable and essential a part of repentance, this holy man esteemed shame, for the sins they had been guilty of, to be. And indeed upon all occasions of solemn repentance and humiliation for sin, this taking shame for their sins is hardly ever omitted, as if there could be no sincere confession of sin and repentance for it, without testifying their shame, and “ confusion of face” upon the remembrance of their sins.

Now

Now to stir up this affection of shame in us, let me offer to you these three considerations.

I. Consider what great reason we have to be heartily ashamed of all the sins and offences which we have been guilty of against God. It was a good old precept of philosophy, That we should reverence ourselves, i. e. that we should never do any thing that should be matter of shame and reproach to us afterwards, nothing that misbecomes us, and is unworthy of us.

I have shewn at large, that all sin and vice is a dishonour to our nature, and beneath the dignity of it; that it is a great reproach to our reason, and directly contrary to our true and best interest; that it hath all the aggravating circumstances of infamy and shame; that every sin that was at any time committed by us, was done in the presence of one, whom of all persons in the world we have most reason to reverence, and against him, to whom of all others we stand most obliged for the greatest favours, for innumerable benefits, for infinite mercy and patience and forbearance towards us, in the presence of the holy and just God, who is at the farthest distance from sin, and the greatest and most implacable enemy to it in the whole world; and who will one day punish all our faults, and expose us to open shame for them; who will "bring every work into judgment, and "every secret sin" that ever we committed, and take vengeance upon us for all our iniquities. So that whenever we sin, we shamefully intreat ourselves, and give the deepest wounds to our reputation in the esteem of him, who is the most competent judge of what is truly honourable and praise-worthy, and clothe ourselves with shame and dishonour.

We are ashamed of poverty, because the poor man

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is despised, and almost ridiculous in the eye of the proud and covetous rich man, "whose riches are his high tower," and make him apt to look down upon the poor man that is below him, with contempt and scorn; we are ashamed of a dangerous and contagious disease, because all men fly infectious company: but a man may be poor or sick by misfortune; but no man is wicked, but by his own fault and wilful choice. Ill-natured and inconsiderate men will be apt to condemn us for our poverty and affliction in any kind: but by our vices we render ourselves odious to God, and to all good and considerate men.

II. Consider that shame for sin now, is the way to prevent eternal shame and confusion hereafter. For this is one great part of the misery of another world, that the sinner shall then "be filled with everlasting shame and confusion" at the remembrance of his faults and folly. The eternal misery of wicked men is sometimes in scripture represented, as if it consisted only or chiefly in the infamy and reproach which will then overwhelm them, when all their crimes and faults shall be exposed and laid open to the view of the whole world, Dan. xii. 2. where the general resurrection of the just and unjust is thus described; "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt:" where everlasting life and everlasting shame are opposed, as if eternal shame were a kind of perpetual death.

In this world sinners make a hard shift, by concealing or extenuating their faults, as well as they can, to suppress or lessen their shame; they have not now so clear and full a conviction of the evil and folly of their sin; God is pleased to bear with them, and to spare them at present, and they do not yet feel the
dismal

disfmal effects and consequences of a wicked life : but in the next world, when “ the righteous judgment of God is revealed,” and the full vials of his wrath shall be poured forth upon sinners, they shall then “ be clothed with shame as with a garment, and “ be covered with confusion :” then they will feel the folly of their sins, and have a sensible demonstration within themselves of the infinite evil of them ; their own consciences will then furiously fly in their faces, and with the greatest bitterness and rage upbraid and reproach them with the folly of their own doings ; and so long as we are sensible, that we suffer for our own folly, so long we must unavoidably be ashamed of what we have done. So that if sinners shall be everlastingly tormented in another world, it necessarily follows, that they shall be eternally confounded.

Is it not then better to remember our ways now, and to be ashamed and repent of them, than to bring everlasting shame and confusion upon ourselves, before God, and angels, and men ? This is the argument which St. John useth, to take men off from sin, and to engage them to holiness and righteousness of life ; 1 Joh. ii. 28. “ That when he shall appear,” that is, when he shall come to judge the world, “ we “ may have confidence, and not be ashamed before “ him at his coming.”

III. And lastly, Consider that nothing sets men at a farther distance from repentance, and all hopes of their becoming better, and brings them nearer to ruin, than impudence in a sinful course. There are too many in the world, who are so far from being ashamed of their wickedness, and blushing at the mention of their faults, that they boast of them, and glory in them. God often complains of this in the people

people of Israel, as a sad presage of their ruin, and an ill sign of their desperate and irrecoverable condition: Jer. iii. 3. "Thou hadst a whore's forehead, and refusedst to be ashamed;" and Jerem. vi. 15. "Were they ashamed, when they committed abominations? Nay, they were not ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall, and in the time that I visit them they shall be cast down." Hear likewise how the apostle doth lament the case of such persons, as are incurable and past all remedy: Philip iii. 18, 19. "There are many of whom I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are enemies to the cross of CHRIST; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame." Such persons who glory in that which ought to be their shame, what can their end be but destruction?

There is certainly no greater argument of a degenerate person, and of one that is utterly lost to all sense of goodness, than to be void of shame: and as on the one hand, they must be very towardsly, and well disposed to virtue, who are drawn by ingenuity, and meer sense of obligation and kindness; so on the other hand, they must be very stupid and insensible, who are not wrought upon by arguments of fear, and sense of shame. There is hardly any hopes of that man, who is not to be reclaimed from an evil course, neither by the apprehension of danger, nor of disgrace, and who can at once securely neglect both his safety and reputation.

Hear how the prophet represents the deplorable case of such persons, Isa. iii. 9. "The shew of their countenance bears witness against them;" in the Hebrew it is, "The hardness of their countenance doth

“ doth testify against them, and they declare their
“ sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Wo unto their
“ souls, for they have rewarded evil to themselves.”

When men are once arrived to that pitch of impiety, as to harden their foreheads against all sense and shew of shame, and so as to be able to set a good face upon the foulest matter in the world; “ wo unto them,” because their case seems then to be desperate, and past all hopes of recovery. For who can hope, that a man will forsake his sins, when he is not so much as ashamed of them? But yet one would think, that those that are not ashamed of their impiety, should be ashamed of their impudence, and should at least blush at this, that they can do the vilest and the most shameful things in the world without blushing.

To conclude this whole discourse, let the consideration of the evil and shamefulnes of sin have this double effect upon us, to make us heartily ashamed of the past errors and miscarriages of our lives, and firmly resolved to do better for the future.

I. To be heartily ashamed of the past errors of our lives. So often as we reflect upon the manifold and heinous provocations of the divine majesty, which many of us have been guilty of in the long course of a wicked life, together with the heavy aggravations of our sins, by all the circumstances that can render them abominable and shameful, not only in the eye of God and men, but of our own consciences likewise; we have great reason to humble ourselves before God, in a penitent acknowledgment of them, and every one of us to say with Job, “ Behold I am vile,
“ what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand
“ upon my mouth, I abhor myself, and repent in
“ dust and ashes;” and with Ezra, “ O my God!

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“ I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God ; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens : And now, O my God, what shall we say after this ? for we have forsaken thy commandments ;” and with holy Daniel, “ we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly ; O LORD ! righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face.” Thus we should reproach and upbraid ourselves in the presence of that holy God, whom we have so often and so highly offended, and against whom we have done as evil things as we could, and say with the prodigal son in the parable ; “ Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.”

If we would thus take shame to ourselves, and humble ourselves before God, he would “ be merciful to us miserable sinners ;” he would “ take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously ;” and so soon as ever he saw us coming towards him, would meet us with joy, and embrace us in the arms of his mercy. And then,

II. As we should be heartily ashamed of the past errors and miscarriages of our lives, so we should firmly resolve, by God’s grace, to do better for the future ; never to consent to iniquity, or to do any thing which we are convinced is contrary to our duty, and which will be matter of shame to us, when we come to look back upon it, and make our blood to rise in our faces at the mention or intimation of it ; which will make us to sneak, and “ hang down our heads,” when we are twitted and upbraided with it, and which, if it be not prevented by a timely humiliation and repentance, will fill us with horror

and

and amazement, with shame and confusion of face, both at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.

So that when we look into our lives, and examine the actions of them, when we consider what we have done, and what our doings have deserved, we should, in a due sense of the great and manifold miscarriages of our lives, and from a deep sorrow and shame and detestation of ourselves for them ; I say, we should, with that true penitent described in Job, take words to ourselves, and say, “ surely it is meet “ to be said unto God, I will not offend any more ; “ that which I know not, teach thou me ; and if I “ have done iniquity, I will do no more.” And thus I have done with the second inconvenience of a sinful and vicious course of life, viz. that the reflection upon it afterwards causeth shame ; “ What fruit “ had you then in those things, whereof ye are now “ ashamed ?”

S E R M O N CLXV.

The final issue of sin, an argument
for repentance.

R O M. vi. 21, 22.

What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed ? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

TH E S E words are a comparison between an holy and virtuous and a sinful and vicious course of life, and set before us the manifest inconveniencies

S E R M.
CLXV.

The third
sermon on
this text.

veniences of the one, and the manifold advantages of the other. I have entered into a discourse upon the first of these heads, viz. The manifest inconveniences of a sinful and vicious course: and the text mentions these three.

I. That it is unprofitable.

II. That the reflection upon it afterwards is matter of shame. These two I have spoken largely to, I shall now proceed to the

III. And last inconvenience, which the text mentions, of a sinful and vicious course of life, viz. that the final issue and consequence of these things is very dismal and miserable; "the end of those things is death." No fruit then when ye did these things; shame now that you come to reflect upon them; and misery and death at the last.

There are indeed almost innumerable considerations and arguments to discourage and deter men from sin; the unreasonableness of it in itself; the injustice and disloyalty, and ingratitude of it in respect to God; the ill example of it to others; the cruelty of it to ourselves; the shame and dishonour that attends it; the grief and sorrow which it will cost us, if ever we be brought to a due sense of it; the trouble and horror of a guilty conscience, that will perpetually haunt us; but above all the miserable event and sad issue of a wicked course of life continued in, and finally unrepented of. The temptations to sin may be alluring enough, and look upon us with a smiling countenance, and the commission may afford us a short and imperfect pleasure: but the remembrance of it will certainly be bitter, and the end of it miserable.

And this consideration is of all others the most apt to work upon the generality of men, especially upon

upon the more obstinate and obdurate sort of sinners, and those whom no other arguments will penetrate; that whatever the present pleasure and advantage of sin may be, it will be bitterness and misery in the end.

The two former inconveniencies of a sinful course, which I have lately discoursed of, viz. That sin is unprofitable, and that it is shameful, are very considerable, and ought to be great arguments against it to every sinner, and considerate man: and yet how light are they, and but as the very small dust upon the balance, in comparison of that insupportable weight of misery which will oppress the sinner at last! "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil." This, this is the sting of all, that "the end of these things is death."

It is very usual in scripture to express the greatest happiness, and the greatest misery, by life and death; life being the first and most desirable of all other blessings, because it is the foundation of them, and that which makes us capable of all the rest. Hence we find in scripture, that all the blessings of the gospel are summed up in this one word, "John xx. 31. "These things are written, that you might believe "that JESUS is the CHRIST, the Son of GOD, and "that believing ye might have life through his "name." 1 John iv. 9. "In this was manifest the "love of GOD towards us, because that GOD sent his "only begotten Son into the world, that we might "live through him." So that under this term or notion of life, the scripture is wont to express all happiness to us, and more especially that eternal life which is the great promise of the gospel. And this is life by way of eminency; as if this frail and mortal and miserable life, which we live here in this world, did not deserve that name. And

And on the other hand, all the evils which are consequent upon sin, especially the dreadful and lasting misery of another world, are called by the name of death, "the end of these things is death." So the apostle, here in the text, and v. 23. "The wages of sin is death," not only a temporal death, but such a death as is opposed to eternal life; "The wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life through JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD." So that death here in the text is plainly intended to comprehend in it all those fearful and astonishing miseries, wherewith the wrath of God will pursue and afflict sinners in another world.

But what and how great this misery is, I am not able to declare to you; "it hath" no more "entered into the heart of man," than those great and glorious things which "God hath laid up for them that love him:" and as I would fain hope, that none of us here shall ever have the sad experience of it; so none but those who have felt it, are able to give a tolerable description of the intolerableness of it.

But by what the scripture hath said of it in general, and in such metaphors as are most level to our present capacity, it appears so full of terror, that I am loth to attempt the representation of it. There are so many other arguments, that are more human and natural, and more proper to work upon the reason and ingenuity of men; as the great love and kindness of God to us; the grievous sufferings of his Son for us; the unreasonableness and shameful-ness of sin; the present benefit and advantage, the peace and pleasure of an holy and virtuous life; and the mighty rewards promised to it in another world, that one would think these should be abundantly sufficient to prevail with men to gain them to goodness,

ness, and that they need not to be frighted into it, and to have the law laid to them, as it was once given to the people of "Israel, in thunder and lightning, in blackness, in darkness and tempest," so as to make them "exceedingly to fear and tremble."

And it seems a very hard case, that when we have to deal with men, sensible enough of their interest in other cases, and diligent enough to mind it, we cannot persuade them to accept of happiness, without setting before them the terrors of eternal darkness, and those amazing and endless miseries, which will certainly be the portion of those who refuse so great an happiness; this I say seems very hard, that men must be carried to the gate of hell, before they can be brought to set their faces towards heaven, and to think in good earnest of getting thither.

And yet it cannot be dissembled, that the nature of men is so degenerate, as to stand in need of this argument; and that men are so far engaged in an evil course, that they are not to be reclaimed from it by any other consideration, but of the endless and unspeakable misery of impenitent sinners in another world. And therefore GOD, knowing how necessary this is, doth frequently make use of it; and our blessed SAVIOUR, than whom none was ever more mild and gentle, doth often set this consideration before men to take them off from sin, and to bring them to do better. And this St. Paul tells us, Rom. i. 18. is one principal thing which renders the gospel so powerful an instrument for the reforming and saving of mankind, because "therein the wrath of GOD is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

So that how harsh and unpleasant soever this argument may be, the great stupidity and folly of some men,

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men, and their inveterate obstinacy in an evil course makes it necessary for us to press it home, that those who will not be moved, and made sensible of the danger and inconvenience of sin by gentler arguments, may be roused and awakened by the terrors of eternal misery.

That the last issue and consequence of a wicked life will be very miserable, the general apprehension of mankind concerning the fate of bad men in another world, and the secret misgivings of mens consciences, gives men too much ground to fear. Besides that the justice of divine providence, which is not many times in this world so clear and manifest, does seem to require that there should be a time of recompence, when the virtue and patience of good men should be rewarded, and the insolence and obstinacy of bad men should be punished. This cannot but appear very reasonable to any man, that considers the nature of God, and is persuaded that he governs the world, and hath given laws to mankind, by the observance whereof they may be happy, and by the neglect and contempt whereof they must be miserable.

But that there might remain no doubts upon the minds of men, concerning these matters, God hath been pleased to reveal this from heaven, by a person sent by him on purpose to declare it to the world; and to the truth of these doctrines concerning a future state and a day of judgment, and recompences, God hath given testimony by unquestionable miracles wrought for the confirmation of them, and particularly by “ the resurrection of JESUS CHRIST
“ from the dead, whereby he hath given an assurance unto all men, that he is” the person “ ordained by God to judge the world in righteousness,
“ and

“ and to render to every man according to his deeds ;
“ to them who by patient continuance in well-do-
“ ing seek for glory, and honour and immortality,
“ eternal life ; but to them who obey not the truth,
“ but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath,
“ tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man
“ that doeth evil.”

So that how quietly soever wicked men may pass through this world, or out of it, (which they seldom do) misery will certainly overtake their sins at last ; unspeakable and intolerable misery, arising from the anguish of a guilty conscience, from a lively apprehension of their sad loss, and from a quick sense of the sharp pain which they labour under ; and all this aggravated and set off with the consideration of past pleasure, and the despair of future ease. Each of these is misery enough, and all of them together do constitute and make up that dismal and forlorn state, which the scripture calls hell and damnation.

I shall therefore briefly represent (for it is by no means desirable to dwell long upon so melancholy and frightful an argument)

First, The principal ingredients which constitute this miserable state. And,

Secondly, The aggravations of it.

First, The principal ingredients which constitute this miserable state ; and they are these three which I have mentioned.

I. The anguish of a guilty mind.

II. The lively apprehensions of the invaluable happiness which they have lost.

III. A quick sense of the intolerable pains which they lie under.

I. The anguish of a guilty conscience. And this is natural ; for there is a worm that abides in a guilty

The final issue of sin,

conscience, and is continually gnawing it. This is that our SAVIOUR calls "the worm that dies not." And though GOD should inflict no positive punishment upon sinners, yet this is a revenge which every man's mind would take upon him; for things are so ordered by GOD, in the original frame and constitution of our minds, that on the one hand peace and pleasure, contentment and satisfaction do naturally arise in our minds from the conscience of well-doing, and spring up in the soul of every good man: and on the other hand, no man knowingly does an evil action, but his guilty conscience galls him for it, and the remembrance of it is full of bitterness to him.

And this the sinner feels in this world; he disguiseth and dissembleth his trouble as much as he can, and shifts off these uneasy thoughts by all the diversions he can devise, and by this means palliates his disease, and renders his condition in some sort tolerable unto himself: but when he is alone, or cast upon the bed of sickness, and his thoughts are let loose upon him, and he hath nothing to give them a diversion, how does his guilt ferment and work! and the fever, which lurked before, does now shew itself, and is ready to burn him up; so that nothing can appear more dismal and ghastly, than such a man does to himself.

And much more, when sinners come into the other world, and are entered into the regions of darkness, and the melancholy shades, where evil spirits are continually wandring up and down; where they can meet with nothing either of employment or pleasure, to give the least diversion to their pensive minds; where they shall find nothing to do, but to reflect upon, and bemoan themselves; where all the wicked actions that ever they committed shall come fresh

into

into their minds, and stare their consciences in the face. It is not to be imagined, what sad scenes will then be present to their imaginations, and what sharp reflections their own guilty minds will make upon them, and what swarms of furies will possess them.

So soon as ever they are entered upon that state, they will then find themselves forsaken of all those comforts which they once placed so much happiness in ; and they will have nothing to converse with, but their own uneasy selves, and those that are as miserable as themselves, and therefore incapable of administering any comfort to one another. They will then have nothing to think on, but what will trouble them ; and every new thought will be a new increase of their trouble. Their guilt will make them restless, and the more restless they are, the more will their minds be enraged ; and there will be no end of their vexation, because the cause and ground of it is perpetual. For there is no possible way to get rid of guilt, but by repentance ; and there is no encouragement, no argument to repentance, where there is no hope of pardon. So that if God should hold his hand, and leave sinners to themselves, and to the lashes of their own conscience, a more severe and terrible torment can hardly be imagined, than that which a guilty mind would execute upon itself.

II. Another ingredient into the miseries of sinners in another world, is the lively apprehension of the invaluable happiness which they have lost by their own obstinacy and foolish choice. In the next world wicked men shall be for ever separated from God, who is the fountain of happiness, and from all the comforts of his presence and favour. This, our SAVIOUR tells us, is the first part of that dreadful sentence that shall be passed upon the wicked at the great

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day; "depart from me;" which words, though they do not signify any positive infliction and torment, yet they import the greatest loss that can be imagined. And it is not so easy to determine which is the greatest of evils, loss or pain. Indeed to a creature that is only endowed with sense, there can be no misery but that of pain and suffering: but to those who have reason and understanding, and are capable of knowing the value of things, and of reflecting upon themselves in the want of them, the greatest loss may be as grievous and hard to be born as the greatest pain.

It is true, that sinners are now so immers'd in the gross and sensual delights of this world, that they have no apprehension of the joys of heaven, and the pleasures of God's presence, and of the happiness that is to be enjoyed in communion with him, and therefore they are not now capable of estimating the greatness of this loss. But this insensibleness of wicked men continues no longer than this present state, which affords them variety of objects of pleasure and of business to divert them and entertain them: but when they come into the other world, they shall then have nothing else to think upon, but the sad condition into which they have brought themselves, nothing to do but to pore and meditate upon their own misfortune, when they shall lift up their eyes, and with the rich man in the parable, in the midst of their torments, look up to those who are "in Abraham's bosom;" and their misery will be mightily increased by the contemplation of that happiness which others enjoy, and themselves have so foolishly forfeited and fallen short of; insomuch that it would be happy for them, if that God, from whose presence they are banished, that heaven from which they have excluded themselves, and

and that everlasting glory, which they have despised S E R M.
and neglected, might be for ever hid from their CLXV.
eyes, and never come into their minds.

III. This is not all, but besides the sad apprehension of their loss, they shall endure the sharpest pains. These God hath threatened sinners withal, and they are in scripture represented to us, by the most grievous and intolerable pains that in this world we are acquainted withal, as by the pain of burning. Hence the wicked are said “to be cast into the lake, “ which burns with fire and brimstone, and into “ the fire which is not quenched:” which, whether it be literally to be understood or not, is certainly intended to signify the most severe kind of torment; but what that is, and in what manner it shall be inflicted, none know but they that feel it, and lie under it. The scripture tells so much in general of it, as is enough to warn men to avoid it; that it is the effect of a mighty displeasure, and of anger armed with omnipotence, and consequently must needs be very terrible, more dreadful than we can now conceive, and probably greater than can be described by any of those pains and sufferings which now we are acquainted withal; for “who knows the power of God’s “ anger,” and the utmost of what almighty justice can do to sinners? Who can comprehend the vast significance of those expressions, “fear him, who after he hath killed can destroy both body and soul “ in hell?” and again, “it is a fearful thing to fall “ into the hands of the living God?” One would think this were misery enough, and needed no farther aggravation; and yet it hath two terrible ones, from the consideration of past pleasures which sinners have enjoyed in this world, and from an utter despair of future ease and remedy.

1. From

1. From the consideration of the past pleasures which sinners have enjoyed in this life. This will make their sufferings much more sharp and sensible; for as nothing commends pleasure more, and gives happiness a quicker taste and relish, than precedent sufferings and pain, there is not perhaps a greater pleasure in the world, than the strange and sudden ease which a man finds after a sharp fit of the stone or colick, or after a man is taken off the rack, and nature which was in an agony before is all at once set at perfect ease: so on the other hand, nothing exasperates suffering more, and sets a keener edge upon misery, than to step into afflictions and pain immediately out of a state of great ease and pleasure. This we find in the parable was the great aggravation of the rich man's torment, that he had first "received his good things," and was afterwards tormented. We may do well to consider this, that those pleasures of sin which have now so much of temptation in them, will in the next world be one of the chief aggravations of our torment.

2. The greatest aggravation of this misery will be, that it is attended with the despair of any future ease; and when misery and despair meet together, they make a man completely miserable. The duration of this misery is expressed to us in scripture, by such words as are used to signify the longest and most interminable duration. "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, Matt. xxv. 41. Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," Mark ix. 43. And 2 Thess. i. 7. it is there said, that those "who know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son, shall be punish'd with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the LORD, and from the glory of his power." And in Rev. xx. 10.

That

That "the wicked shall be tormented day and night
"for ever and ever." And what can be imagined
beyond this? This is the perfection of misery, to lye
under the greatest torment, and yet be in despair of
ever finding the least ease.

And thus I have done with the first thing I pro-
pounded to speak to from this text, viz. the mani-
fest inconveniencies of a sinful and vicious course of
life; that it brings no present benefit or advantage
to us; that the reflection upon it causeth shame; and
that it is fearful and miserable in the last issue and con-
sequence of it. "What fruit had you," &c.

I should now have proceeded to the second part
of the text, which represents to us the manifold ad-
vantages of an holy and virtuous course of life;
ver. 22. "But now being made free from sin, and
"become the servants of righteousness, ye have your
"fruit unto holiness," there's the present advantage
of it; "and the end everlasting life," there's the fu-
ture reward of it. But this is a large argument,
which will require a discourse by itself, and therefore
I shall not now enter upon it; but shall only make
some reflections upon what hath been said, concerning
the miserable issue and consequence of a wicked life
impenitently persisted in.

And surely if we firmly believe and seriously con-
sider these things, we have no reason to be fond of
any vice; we can take no greater comfort or con-
tentment in a sinful course. If we could for the
seeming advantage and short pleasure of some sins,
dispense with the temporal mischiefs and inconveni-
encies of them, which yet I cannot see how any pru-
dent and considerate man could do: if we could
conquer shame, and bear the infamy and reproach
which attends most sins, and could digest the up-
braidings

braidings of our own consciences, so often as we call them to remembrance, and reflect seriously upon them; though for the gratifying an importunate inclination, and an impetuous appetite, all the inconveniencies of them might be born withal; yet methinks the very thought of the end and issue of a wicked life, that "the end of these things is death," that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," far greater than we can now describe, or imagine, "shall be to every soul of man that doth evil," should over-rule us. Though the violence of an irregular lust and desire are able to bear down all other arguments, yet methinks the eternal interest of our precious and immortal souls should still lye near our hearts, and affect us very sensibly. Methinks the consideration of another world, and of all eternity, and of that dismal fate which attends impenitent sinners after this life, and the dreadful hazard of being miserable for ever, should be more than enough to dishearten any man from a wicked life, and to bring him to a better mind and course.

And if the plain representations of these things do not prevail with men to this purpose, it is a sign that either they do not believe these things, or else that they do not consider them; one of these two must be the reason why any man, notwithstanding these terrible threatnings of God's word, does venture to continue in an evil course.

It is vehemently to be suspected, that men do not really believe these things, that they are not fully persuaded that there is another state after this life, in which the righteous God "will render to every man according to his deeds:" and therefore so much wickedness as we see in the lives of men, so much infidelity may reasonably be suspected to lye

lurking

lurking in their hearts. They may indeed seemingly profess to believe these things ; but he that would know what a man inwardly and firmly believes, should attend rather to his actions, than to his verbal professions : For if any man lives so, as no man that believes the principles of the christian religion in reason can live, there is too much reason to question whether that man doth believe his religion ; he may say he does, but there is a far greater evidence in the case than words ; the actions of the man are by far the most credible declarations of the inward sense and persuasion of his mind.

Did men firmly and heartily believe that there is a God that governs the world, and regards the actions of men, and that “ he hath appointed a day “ in which he will judge the world in righteousness,” and that all mankind shall appear before him in that day, and every action that they have done in their whole lives shall be brought upon the stage, and pass a strict examination and censure, and that those who have made conscience of their duty to God and men, and have “ lived soberly, righteously, and “ godly in this present world,” shall be unspeakably and eternally happy in the next ; but those who have lived leud and licentious lives, and persisted in an impenitent course, shall be extremely and everlastingly miserable, without pity, and without comfort, and without remedy, and without hope of ever being otherwise ; I say, if men were fully and firmly persuaded of these things, it is not credible, it is hardly possible that they should live such profane and impious, such careless and dissolute lives, as we daily see a great part of mankind do.

That man that can be awed from his duty, or tempted to sin by any of the pleasures or terrors of

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this world, that for the present enjoyment of his lusts can be contented to venture his soul, what greater evidence than this can there be, that this man does not believe the threatnings of the gospel, and how “fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God?” That man that can be willing to undergo an hard service for several years, that he may be in a way to get an estate, and be rich in this world; and yet will not be persuaded to restrain himself of his liberty, or to deny his pleasure, or to check his appetite or lust, for the greatest reward that God can promise, or the severest punishment that he can threaten; can any man reasonably think, that this man is persuaded of any such happiness or misery after this life, as is plainly revealed in the gospel, that “verily there is a reward for the righteous, and “verily there is a God that judgeth the earth?” For what can he that believes not one syllable of the bible, do worse than this comes to?

A strong and vigorous faith even in temporal cases, is a powerful principle of action, especially if it be backed and enforced with arguments of fear. He that believes the reality of a thing, and that it is good for him, and that it may be attained, and that if he do attain it, it will make him very happy, and that without it he shall be extremely miserable; such a belief and persuasion will put a man upon difficult things, and make him to put forth a vigorous endeavour, and to use a mighty industry for the obtaining of that, concerning which he is thus persuaded.

And the faith of the gospel ought to be so much the more powerful, by how much the objects of hope and fear, which it presents to us, are greater and more considerable. Did men fully believe the happiness

pineness of heaven, and the torments of hell, and were they as verily persuaded of the truth of them, as if they were before their eyes, how insignificant would all the terrors and temptations of sense be to draw them into sin, and seduce them from their duty?

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But although it seems very strange, and almost incredible, that men should believe these things, and yet live wicked and impious lives; yet because I have no mind, and God knows there's no need to increase the number of infidels in this age, I shall chuse rather to impute a great deal of the wickedness that is in the world, to the inconsiderateness of men, than to their unbelief. I will grant that they do in some sort believe these things, or at least that they do not disbelieve them; and then the great cause of mens ruin must be, that they do not attend to the consequence of this belief, and how men ought to live that are thus persuaded. Men stifle their reason, and suffer themselves to be hurried away by sense, into the embraces of sensual objects and things present, but do not consider what the end of these things will be, and what is like to become of them hereafter; for it is not to be imagined, but that man who shall calmly consider with himself what sin is, the shortness of its pleasure, and the eternity of its punishment, should seriously resolve upon a better course of life.

And why do we not consider these things, which are of so infinite concernment to us? What have we our reason for, but to reflect upon ourselves, and to mind what we do, and wisely to compare things together, and upon the whole matter to judge what makes most for our true and lasting interest? to consider our whole selves, our souls as well as our bodies; and our whole duration not only in this world, but in the other, not only with regard to time, but

to eternity? to look before us to the last issue and event of our actions, and to the farthest consequence of them, and to reckon upon what will be hereafter, as well as what is present; and if we suspect or hope or fear, especially if we have good reason to believe a future state after death, in which we shall be happy or miserable to all eternity, according as we manage and behave ourselves in this world, to resolve to make it our greatest design and concernment while we are in this world, so to live and demean ourselves, that we may be of the number of those that shall be accounted worthy to escape that misery, and to obtain that happiness, which will last and continue for ever.

And if men would but apply their minds seriously to the consideration of these things, they could not act so imprudently as they do; they would not live so by chance and without design, taking the pleasure that comes next, and avoiding the present evils which press upon them, without any regard to those that are future, and at a distance, though they be infinitely greater and more considerable: If men could have the patience to debate and argue these matters with themselves, they could not live so preposterously as they do, preferring their bodies before their souls, and the world before God, and the things which are temporal before the things that are eternal.

Did men verily and in good earnest believe but half of that to be true, which hath now been declared to you, concerning the miserable state of impenitent sinners in another world, (and I am very sure, that the one half of that which is true concerning that state hath not been told you) I say, did we in any measure believe what hath been so imperfectly represented, “ what manner of persons should we all be,
“ in

“ in all holy conversation and godliness, waiting for
“ and hastening unto” (that is, making haste to make
the best preparation we could for) “ the coming of
“ the day of GOD!”

I will conclude all with our SAVIOUR’S exhorta-
tion to his disciples, and to all others; “ watch ye
“ therefore and pray always, that ye may be ac-
“ counted worthy to escape all these things, and to
“ stand before the Son of man: To whom, with
“ the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and
“ glory, world without end. Amen.”

S E R M O N CLXVI.

The present and future advantage of an
holy and virtuous life.

R O M. vi. 21, 22.

*What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye
are now ashamed? For the end of those things is
death. But now being made free from sin, and
become servants to GOD, ye have your fruit unto
holiness, and the end everlasting life.*

I HAVE several times told you, that the apostle S E R M
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in these words makes a comparison between an The fourth
sermon on
this text.
holy and virtuous, and a sinful and vicious course of
life, and sets before us the manifest inconveniencies
of the one, and the manifold advantages of the other.

I have finished my discourse upon the first part of
the comparison; the manifest inconveniencies of a
sinful and vicious course. I proceed now to the other
part of the comparison, which was the Second

Second thing I propounded to speak to from these words, viz. the manifold benefits and advantages of an holy and virtuous course ; and that upon these two accounts.

First, Of the present benefit and advantage of it, which the apostle here calls fruit, “ ye have your fruit “ unto holiness.”

Secondly, In respect of the future reward of it, “ and the end everlasting life.” So that here is a considerable earnest in hand, besides a mighty recompence afterwards, infinitely beyond the proportion of our best actions and services, both in regard of the greatness and duration of it, “ everlasting life ;” that is, for a few transient acts of obedience, a perfect and immutable and endless state of happiness. And these two the apostle mentions in opposition to the inconveniencies and evil consequences of a wicked and vicious course ; “ what fruit had you then in those “ things ? &c.”

But before I come to speak to these two particulars, I shall take notice of the description which the apostle here makes, of the change from a state of sin and vice to a state of holiness and virtue. “ But now being made free from sin, and become the servants of GOD ;” intimating that the state of sin is a state of servitude and slavery, from which repentance and the change which is thereby made does set us free ; “ but now being made “ free from sin.” And so our SAVIOUR tells us, that “ whosoever committeth sin is the servant of “ sin ;” and this is the vilest and hardest slavery in the world, because it is the servitude of the soul, the best and noblest part of ourselves ; it is the subjection of our reason, which ought to rule and bear sway over the inferior faculties, to our sensual

sual appetites and brutish passions ; which is as uncomely a sight, as to see beggars ride on horse-back, and princes walk on foot. And as inferior persons, when they are advanced to power, are strangely insolent and tyrannical towards those that are subject to them ; so the lusts and passions of men, when they once get the command of them, are the most domineering tyrants in the world ; and there is no such slave as a man that is subject to his appetite and lust, that is under the power of irregular passions and vicious inclinations, which transport and hurry him to the vilest and most unreasonable things. For a wicked man is a slave to as many masters as he hath passions and vices ; and they are very imperious and exacting, and the more he yields to them, the more they grow upon him, and exercise the greater tyranny over him : and being subject to so many masters, the poor slave is continually divided and distracted between their contrary commands and impositions ; one passion hurries him one way, and another as violently drives him another ; one lust commands him upon such a service, and another it may be at the same time calls him to another work. His pride and ambition bids him spend and lay it out, whilst his covetousness holds his hand fast closed ; so that he knows not many times how to dispose of himself or what to do, he must displease some of his masters, and what inclination soever he contradicts, he certainly displeaseth himself.

And that which aggravates the misery of his condition is, that he voluntarily submits to this servitude. In other cases men are made slaves against their wills, and are brought under the force and power of others, whom they are not able to resist : but the sinner chuseth this servitude, and willingly puts his neck

neck under this yoke. There are few men in the world so sick of their liberty, and so weary of their own happiness, as to chuse this condition: but the sinner sells himself, and voluntarily parts with that liberty, which he might keep, and which none could take from him.

And which makes this condition yet more intolerable, he makes himself a slave to his own servants, to those who are born to be subject to him, to his own appetites and passions; and this certainly is the worst kind of slavery, so much worse than that of mines and galleys, as the soul is more noble and excellent than the body.

Men are not usually so sensible of the misery of this kind of servitude, because they are govern'd by sense more than reason: But according to a true judgment and estimation of things, a vicious course of life is the saddest slavery of all others. And therefore the gospel represents it as a design every way worthy of the Son of God, to come down from heaven, and to debase himself so far, as to assume our nature, and to submit to the death of the cross, on purpose to rescue us from this slavery, and to assert us into "the liberty of the sons of God." And this is the great design of the doctrine of the gospel, to free men from the bondage of their lusts, and to bring them to the service of God, "whose service is perfect freedom." And therefore our SAVIOUR tells us, John viii. 31, 32. That "if we continue in his word," i. e. if we obey his doctrine, and frame our lives according to it, it will make us free; "ye shall know (says he) the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And if we observe it, the scripture delights very much to set forth to us the benefits and advantages of the christian religion by the metaphor

phor of liberty and redemption from captivity and slavery. Hence our SAVIOUR is often called the redeemer and deliverer, and is said to have "obtained eternal redemption for us." And the publishing of the gospel is compared to the proclaiming of the year of jubilee among the Jews, when all persons that would were set at liberty. Isa. lxi. 1, 2. "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me," saith the prophet speaking in the person of the Messiah, "because he hath anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." And it is probable that upon this account likewise the christian doctrine or law is by St. James called "the royal law of liberty."

This is the great design of christianity, to set men free from the slavery of their lusts; and to this end the apostle tells us, Tit. ii. 13. that "CHRIST gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And herein the great mercy and compassion of GOD towards mankind appeared, in that he sent his Son to rescue us from that servitude, which we had so long groaned under, that "being made free from sin, we might become the servants of GOD, and the servants of righteousness."

And this he hath done not only by the price of his blood, but by the power and purity of his doctrine, and the holy example of his life, and by all those considerations which represent to us the misery of our sinful state, and the infinite danger of continuing in it: and on the other hand, by setting before us the advantages of a religious and holy life, and what a blessed change we make, when we quit the service of sin, and become the servants of GOD. It

will not only be a mighty present benefit to us, but will make us happy to all eternity; and these are the two considerations which at first I propounded to speak to at this time.

First, The present benefit of an holy and virtuous life, which the apostle here calls fruit; “But now being made free from sin, and become the servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness.”

Secondly, The future reward and recompence of it; “and the end everlasting life.”

First, Let us consider the present benefit and advantage of an holy and virtuous life, which the apostle here calls fruit. If all things be truly considered, there is no advantage comes to any man by a wicked and vicious course of life. A wicked life is no present advantage; the reflection upon it afterwards is shameful and troublesom; and the end of it miserable. But on the contrary, the advantages of an holy and good life are many and great even in this world, and upon temporal accounts, abstracting from the consideration of a future reward in the world to come.

I shall instance in five or six eminent advantages, which it usually brings to men in this world.

I. It brings great peace and contentment of mind.

II. It is a very fit and proper means to promote our outward temporal interest.

III. It tends to the lengthening our days, and hath frequently the blessing of long life attending upon it.

IV. It gives a man great peace and comfort when he comes to die.

V. After death it transmits a good name and reputation to posterity.

VI. It derives a blessing upon our posterity after us. And these are certainly the greatest blessings that

that a wise man can aim at, and design to himself in this world. Every one of these taken severally is very considerable; but all of them together complete a man's temporal felicity, and raise it to as high a pitch as is to be expected in this world.

I. A religious and virtuous course of life is the best way to peace and contentment of mind, and does commonly bring it. And to a wise man, that knows how to value the ease and satisfaction of his own mind, there cannot be a greater temptation to religion and virtue, than to consider that it is the best and only way to give rest to his mind. And this is present fruit and ready payment; because it immediately follows, or rather accompanies the discharge of our duty. "The fruit of righteousness is peace," saith the prophet; and the apostle to the Hebrews speaks of "the peaceable fruits of righteousness," meaning that inward peace which a righteous man hath in his own mind.

A man needs not to take pains, or to use many arguments, to satisfy and content his own mind, after he hath done a good action, and to convince himself, that he hath no cause to be troubled for it; for peace and pleasure do naturally spring from it: nay, not only so, but there is an unexpressible kind of pleasure and delight, that flows from the testimony of a good conscience. Let but a man take care to satisfy himself in the doing of his duty, and whatever troubles and storms may be raised from without, all will be clear and calm within: for nothing but guilt can trouble a man's mind, and fright his conscience, and make him uneasy to himself; that indeed will wound his spirit, and sting his very soul, and make him full of fearful and tormenting thoughts. This Cain found after he had committed that crying

fin of murdering his brother. Gen. iv. 6. "The
 " LORD said unto Cain, why art thou wrath? And
 " why is thy countenance fallen? His guilt made
 him full of wrath, and discontent filled his mind with
 vexation, and his countenance with shame and con-
 fusion. When a man's conscience is awakened to a
 sense of his guilt, it is angry and froward, and hard-
 er to be stilled than a peevish child: but the practice
 of holiness and virtue does produce just the contrary
 effects; it fills a man's mind with pleasure, and
 makes his countenance chearful.

And this certainly, if it be well considered, is no
 small and contemptible advantage. The peace and
 tranquillity of our minds is the great thing, which all
 the philosophy and wisdom of the world did always
 design to bring men to, as the very utmost happiness
 that a wise man is capable of in this life; and it is
 that which no considerate man would part with, for
 all that this world can give him. The greatest for-
 tune in this world ought to be no temptation to any
 man in his wits, to submit to perpetual sickness and
 pain for the gaining of it; and yet there is no disease
 in the world, that for the sharpness of it is compara-
 ble to the sting of a guilty mind, and no pleasure
 equal to that of innocence and a good conscience.
 And this naturally springs up in the mind of a good
 man, where it is not hindred either by a melancholy
 temper, or by false principles in religion, which fill
 a man with groundless fears and jealousies of the love
 and favour of God towards him; and excepting these
 two cases, this is the ordinary fruit of an holy and
 good course, which is not interrupted by frequent
 falling into sin, and great omissions and violations of
 our duty: for in this case the interruptions of our
 peace and comfort will naturally be answerable to the
 inequality of our obedience.

II. Besides the present and inestimable fruit of holiness, the quiet and satisfaction of our own minds; it is likewise a proper means to promote our interest and happiness in this world. For as every vice is naturally attended with some temporal inconvenience of pain or loss; so there is no grace or virtue, but does apparently conduce to a man's temporal felicity. There are some virtues which tend to the health of his body, and the prolonging of his life, as temperance and chastity; others tend to riches and plenty, as diligence and industry in our callings; others to the secure and peaceable enjoyment of what we have, as truth and fidelity, justice and honesty in all our dealings and intercourse with men. There are other virtues that are apt to oblige mankind to us, and to gain their friendship and good will, their aid and assistance, as kindness, and meekness, and charity, and a generous disposition to do good to all, as far as we have power and opportunity. In a word, there is no real interest of this world, but may ordinarily be as effectually promoted and pursued to as great advantage, by a man that exercises himself in the practice of all virtue and goodness, and usually to far greater advantage, than by one that is intemperate and debauched, deceitful and dishonest, apt to disoblige and provoke, sour and ill-natured to all mankind: for there is none of these vices, but is to a man's real hinderance and disadvantage, in regard of one kind of happiness or another, which men aim at and propose to themselves in this world.

III. A religious and virtuous course of life doth naturally tend to the prolonging of our days, and hath very frequently the blessing of health and long life attending upon it. The practice of a great many virtues is a great preservative of life and health, as the due government

vernment of our appetites and passions, by temperance and chastity and meekness, which prevent the chief causes from within of bodily diseases and distempers; the due government of our tongues and conversation in respect of others, by justice and kindness, and abstaining from wrath and provocation, which are a great security against the dangers of outward violence, according to that of St. Peter, 1 Epist. iii. 10. "He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good, let him seek peace and ensue it."

And beside the natural tendency of things, there is a special blessing of God, which attends good men, and makes "their days long in the land which the LORD their GOD hath given them."

IV. There is nothing gives a man so much comfort when he comes to die, as the reflection upon an holy and good life: and then surely above all other times comfort is most valuable, because our frail and infirm nature doth then stand most in need of it. Then usually mens hearts are faint and their spirits low, and every thing is apt to deject and trouble them; so that we had need to provide ourselves of some excellent cordial against that time; and there is no comfort like to that of a clear conscience, and of an innocent and useful life. This will revive and raise a man's spirits under all the infirmities of his body, because it gives a man good hopes concerning his eternal state, and the hopes of that are apt to fill a man with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

The difference between good and bad men is never so remarkable in this world, as when they are upon their death-bed. This the scripture observes to us, Psal. xxxvii. 37. "Mark the perfect man, and be-
"hold

“hold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.” S E R M. CLXVI.

With what triumph and exultation doth the blessed apostle St. Paul, upon the review of his life, discourse concerning his death and dissolution? 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8. “I am now ready, says he, to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand : “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith ; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the LORD, the righteous judge, will give me at that day.” What would not any of us do to be thus affected when we come to leave the world, and to be able to bear the thoughts of death and eternity with so quiet and well satisfied a mind ! Why, let us but endeavour to live holy lives, and to be useful and serviceable to God in our generation, as this holy apostle was, and we shall have the same ground of joy and triumph which he had. For this is the proper and genuine effect of virtue and goodness ; “the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.” All the good actions that we do in this life are so many seeds of comfort sown in our own consciences, which will spring up one time or other, but especially in the approaches of death, when we come to take a serious review of our lives ; for then mens consciences use to deal plainly and impartially with them, and to tell them the truth ; and if at that time more especially “our hearts condemn us not, then may we “have comfort and confidence towards God.”

V. An holy and virtuous life doth transmit a good name and reputation to posterity. And this Solomon hath determined to be a much greater happiness, than for a man to leave a great estate behind him : a good name, says he, “is rather to be chosen than
“ great

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“ great riches.” Pious and virtuous men do commonly gain to themselves a good esteem and reputation in this world, while they are in it ; but the virtues of good men are not always so bright and shining, as to meet with that respect and acknowledgment which is due to them in this world. Many times they are much clouded by the infirmities and passions which attend them, and are shadowed by some affected singularities and morosities, which those which have lived more retired from the world are more liable to. Besides that the envy of others, who are not so good as they, lies heavy upon them, and does depress them. For bad men are very apt to misinterpret the best actions of the good, and put false colours upon them, and when they have nothing else to object against them, to charge them with hypocrisy and insincerity ; an objection as hard to be answered, as it is to be made good, unless we could see into the hearts of men.

But when good men are dead and gone, and the bright and shining example of their virtues is at a convenient distance, and does not gall and upbraid others, then envy ceaseth, and every man is then content to give a good man his due praise, and his friends and posterity may then quietly enjoy the comfort of his reputation, which is some sort of blessing to him that is gone. This difference Solomon observes to us between good and bad men ; “ the memory of the just is blessed, or well spoken of : but the name of the wicked shall rot.”

VI. And lastly, religion and virtue do derive a blessing upon our posterity after us. “ Oh, that there were such an heart in them,” saith Moses concerning the people of Israel, “ that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that

“ that it might be well with them and with their
“ children for ever !” And to this purpose there are
many promises in scripture of God’s “ blessing the
“ posterity of the righteous,” and “ his shewing
“ mercy to thousands of the children of them that
“ love him, and keep his commandments.”

And this is a great motive to obedience, and
touches upon that natural affection which men bear
to their children ; so that if we have any regard to
them, or concernment for their happiness, we ought
to be very careful of our duty, and afraid to offend
God ; because according as we demean ourselves to-
wards him, we entail a lasting blessing or a great
curse upon our children ; by so many and so strong
bonds hath God tied our duty upon us, that if we
either desire our own happiness, or the happiness of
those that are dearest to us, and part of ourselves, we
must “ fear God and keep his commandments.”

And thus I have briefly represented to you some
of the chief benefits and advantages which an holy
and virtuous life does commonly bring to men in this
world, which is the first encouragement mentioned
in the text ; “ Ye have your fruit unto holiness.”

Before I proceed to the second, I shall only just
take notice, by way of application, of what has
been said on this argument.

1. That it is a great encouragement to well-doing,
to consider that ordinarily piety and goodness are no
hindrance to a man’s temporal felicity, but very
frequently great promoters of it ; so that excepting
only the case of persecution for religion, I think I
may safely challenge any man, to shew me how the
practice of any part or duty of religion, how the
exercise of any grace or virtue is to the prejudice of a
man’s temporal interest, or does debar him of any

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true pleasure, or hinder him of any real advantage, which a prudent and considerate man would think fit to chuse. And as for persecution and sufferings for religion, God can reward us for them, if he please, in this world ; and we have all the assurance that we can desire, that he will do it abundantly in the next.

2. The hope of long life, and especially of a quiet and comfortable death, should be a great encouragement to an holy and virtuous life. He that lives well, takes the best course to live long, and lays in for an happy old age, free from the diseases and infirmities which are naturally procured by a vicious youth, and likewise free from the guilt and galling remembrance of a wicked life. And there is no condition, which we can fall into in this world, that does so clearly discover the difference between a good and bad man, as a death-bed : for then the good man begins most sensibly to enjoy the comforts of well-doing, and the sinner to taste the bitter fruits of sin. What a wide difference is then to be seen, between the hopes and fears of these two sorts of persons ! and surely next to the actual possession of blessedness, the good hopes and comfortable prospect of it are the greatest happiness ; and next to the actual sense of pain, the fear of suffering is the greatest torment.

Though there were nothing beyond this life to be expected, yet if men were sure to be possessed with these delightful or troublesom passions when they come to die, no man that wisely considers things would, for all the pleasures of sin, forfeit the comfort of a righteous soul, leaving this world full of the hope of immortality ; and endure the vexation and anguish of a guilty conscience, and that infinite terror and amazement which so frequently possesseth the soul of a dying sinner.

3. If there be any spark of a generous mind in us, it should animate us to do well, that we may be well spoken of when we are gone off the stage, and may transmit a grateful memory of our lives to those that shall be after us. I proceed now to the

Second thing I proposed, as the great advantage indeed, viz. the glorious reward of a holy and virtuous life in another world, which is here called everlasting life; "and the end everlasting life:" by which the apostle intends to express to us, both the happiness of our future state, and the way and means whereby we are prepared and made meet to be made partakers of it; and that is by the constant and sincere endeavours of an holy and good life. For it is they only that "have their fruit unto holiness," whose end shall be "everlasting life." I shall speak briefly to these two, and so conclude my discourse upon this text.

I. The happiness of our future state, which is here express'd by the name of "everlasting life;" in very few words, but such as are of wonderful weight and significancy: For they import the excellency of this state, and the eternity of it. And who is sufficient to speak to either of these arguments? Both of them are too big to enter now into the heart of man, too vast and boundless to be comprehended by human understanding, and too unwieldy to be managed by the tongue of men and angels, answerable to the unspeakable greatness and glory of them. And if I were able to declare them unto you, as they deserved, you would not be able to hear me. And therefore I shall chuse to say but little upon an argument, of which I can never say enough, and shall very briefly consider those two things which are comprehended in that short description, which the text gives

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us of future happiness, by the name of “everlasting life,” viz. the excellency of this state, and the eternity of it.

1. The excellency of it, which is here represented to us under the notion of life, the most desirable of all other things, because it is the foundation of all other enjoyments whatsoever. Barely to be in being, and to be sensible that we are so, is but a dry notion of life. The true notion of life is to be well and to be happy, *vivere est benè valere*. They who are in the most miserable condition that can be imagined, are in being, and sensible also that they are miserable. But this kind of life is so far from coming under the true notion of life, that the scripture calls it “the second death.” Rev. xxi. 8. It is there said, that “the wicked shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” 1 Tim. chap. xx. ver. 6. “Blessed and holy is he, that hath part in the first resurrection, on such the second death shall have no power.” So that a state of mere misery and torment is not life but death; nay, the scripture will not allow the life of a wicked man in this world to be true life, but speaks of him as dead. Eph. ii. 1. speaking of the sinners among the Gentiles, “You, saith the apostle, hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” And which is more yet, the scripture calls a life of sinful pleasures (which men esteem the only happiness of this world) the scripture, I say, calls this a death, 1 Tim. v. 6. “She that liveth in pleasures, is dead whilst she liveth.” A lewd and unprofitable life, which serves to no good end and purpose, is a death rather than a life. Nay, that decaying and dying life which we now live in this world, and which is allayed by the mixture of so

So many infirmities and pains, of so much trouble and sorrow ; I say, that even this sort of life, for all that we are so fondly in love with it, does hardly deserve the name of life. But the life of the world to come, of which we now speak, this is life indeed ; to do those things which we were made for, to serve the true ends of our being, and to enjoy the comfort and reward of so doing, this is the true notion of life ; and whatever is less than this, is death, or a degree of it, and approach towards it. And therefore very well may heaven and happiness be described by the notion of life, because "truly to live" and "to be happy" are words that signify the same thing.

But what kind of life this is, I can no more describe to you in the particularities of it, than Columbus could have described the particular manners and customs of the people of America, before he or any other person in these parts of the world had seen it or been there. But this I can say of it in general, and that from the infallible testimony of the great Creator and glorious inhabitants of that blessed place, that it is a state of pure pleasure and unmingled joys, of pleasures more manly, more spiritual, and more refined, than any of the delights of sense, consisting in the enlargement of our minds and knowledge to a greater degree, and in the perfect exercise of love and friendship, in the conversation of the best and wisest company, free from self-interest, and all those unsociable passions of envy and jealousy, of malice and ill-will, which spoil the comfort of all conversation in this world ; and, in a word, free from all other passion or design, but an ardent and almost equal desire to contribute all, that by all means possible they can, to the mutual happiness of one another : For charity reigns in heaven, and is the brightest
grace

grace and virtue in the firmament of glory, far outshining all other; as St. Paul, who had himself been taken up into the third heaven, does expressly declare to us.

Farther yet, this blessed state consists more particularly in these two things: In having our bodies raised and refined to a far greater purity and perfection, than ever they had in this world; and in the consequent happiness of the whole man, soul and body, so strictly and firmly united as never to be parted again, and so equally match'd as to be no trouble or impediment to one another.

(I.) In having our bodies raised and refined to a far greater purity and perfection, than ever they had in this world. Our bodies, as they are now, are unequally tempered, and in a perpetual flux and change, continually tending to corruption, because made up of such contrary principles and qualities, as by their perpetual conflict are always at work, conspiring the ruin and dissolution of them; but when they are raised again, they shall be so tempered and so refined, as to be free from all those destructive qualities, which do now threaten their change and dissolution: and though they shall still consist of matter, yet they shall be purified to that degree, as to partake of the immortality of our souls, to which they shall be united, and to be of equal duration with them. So the scripture tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 52, 53. "That our dead bodies shall be raised incorruptible: for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

Our bodies when they are laid down in the grave are vile carcases, but they shall be raised again beautiful and glorious, and as different from what they were before, as the heavenly mansions in which they are

are to reside for ever are from that dark cell of the grave out of which they are raised ; and shall then be endowed with such a life, and strength, and vigour, as to be able without any change or decay to abide and continue for ever in the same state.

Our bodies in this world are gross flesh and blood, liable to be affected with natural and sensual pleasures, and to be afflicted with natural pains and diseases, to be press'd with the natural necessities of hunger and thirst, and obnoxious to all those changes and accidents to which all natural things are subject: But " they shall be raised spiritual bodies," pure and refined from all the dregs of matter ; they shall not hunger, nor thirst, nor be diseased, or in pain any more.

" These houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust," are continually decaying, and therefore stand in need of continual reparation by food and physick: but " our house which is from heaven" (as the apostle calls it) shall be of such lasting and durable materials, as not only time, but even eternity itself, shall make no impression upon it, or cause the least decay in it. " They (says our blessed SAVIOUR) who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, cannot die any more : but shall be like the angels, and are the children of God," i. e. shall in some degree partake of the felicity and immortality of God himself, " who is always the same, and whose years fail not." Nay, the apostle expressly tells us, that our bodies after the resurrection shall be spiritual bodies, so that we shall then be as it were all spirit, and our bodies shall be so raised and refined, that they shall be no clog or impediment to the operation of our souls. And it must needs be a great comfort to us whilst we are in this world, to live in
the

the hopes of so happy and glorious a change; when we consider how our bodies do now oppress our spirits, and what a melancholy and dead weight they are upon them, how grievous an incumbrance and trouble and temptation they are for the most part to us in this mortal state.

(2.) The blessedness of this state consists likewise in the consequent happiness of the whole man, soul and body, so strictly and firmly united as never to be parted again, and so equally matched as to be no trouble and impediment to one another.

In this world the soul and body are for the most part very unequally yoked, so that the soul is not only darkened by the gross fumes and clouds which rise from the body, but loaded and oppress'd by the dull weight of it, which it very heavily lugs on and draws after it; and the soul likewise, and the vicious inclinations and the irregular passions of it, have many times an ill influence upon the body and the humours of it. But in the next world they shall both be purified, the one from sin, and the other from frailty and corruption, and both be admitted to the blessed sight and enjoyment of the ever-blessed God.

But the consideration of this (as I said before) is too big for our narrow apprehensions in this mortal state, and an argument not fit to be treated of by such children, as the wisest of men are in this world; and whenever we attempt to speak of it, we do but lisp like children, and understand like children, and reason like children about it. "That which is imperfect must be done away," and our souls must be raised to a greater perfection, and our understandings filled with a stronger and steadier light, before we can be fit to engage in so profound a contemplation. We must first have been in heaven,
and

and possess'd of that felicity and glory which is there to be enjoyed, before we can either speak or think of it in any measure as it deserves. In the mean time, whenever we set about it, we shall find our faculties oppress'd and dazzled with the weight and splendor of so great and glorious an argument; like St. Paul, who, when " he was caught up into paradise," saw and heard those things, which, when he came down again into this world, he was not able to express, and which it was not possible for the tongue of man to utter.

So that in discoursing of the state of the blessed, we must content ourselves with what the scripture hath revealed in general concerning it; that it is a state of perfect freedom from all those infirmities and imperfections, those evils and miseries, those sins and temptations which we are liable to in this world. So St. John describes the glory and felicity of that state, as they were in visions represented to him, Rev. xxi. 2, 3, 4. " And I, John, saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold! the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away;" that is, all those evils which we saw or suffered in this world, shall for ever vanish and disappear, and, which is the great privilege and felicity of all, that there shall no sin be there, ver. 27. " There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth," and consequently there shall

shall be no misery and curse there. So we read, chap. xxii. 3, 4. "And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servant shall serve him, and they shall see his face." In which last words our employment and our happiness are express'd; but what in particular our employment shall be, and wherein it shall consist, is impossible now to describe; it is sufficient to know in the general, that our employment shall be our unspeakable pleasure, and every way suitable to the glory and happiness of that state, and as much above the noblest and most delightful employments of this world, as the perfection of our bodies, and the power of our souls, shall then be above what they are now in this world.

For there is no doubt, but that he who made us, and endued our souls with a desire of immortality, and so large a capacity of happiness, does understand very well by what way and means to make us happy, and hath in readiness proper exercises and employments for that state, and every way more fitted to make us happy, than any condition or employment in this world is suitable to a temporal happiness: employments that are suitable to "the spirits of just men made perfect," united to bodies purified and refined almost to the condition of spirits; employments which we shall be so far from being weary of, that they shall minister to us a new and fresh delight to all eternity; and this perhaps, not so much from the variety, as from the perpetual and growing pleasure of them.

It is sufficient for us to know this in the general, and to trust the infinite power and wisdom and goodness of God, for the particular manner and circumstances of our happiness; not doubting but that he, who

who is the eternal and inexhaustible spring and fountain of all happiness, can and will derive and convey such a share of it to every one of us as he thinks fit, and in such ways as he, who best understands it, is best able to find out.

In a word, the happiness of the next life shall be such as is worthy of the great King of the world to bestow upon his faithful servants, and such as is infinitely beyond the just reward of their best services; it is "to see GOD," i. e. to contemplate and love the best and most perfect of beings, and "to be for ever with the LORD, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

I will say no more upon this argument, lest I should say less, and because whoever ventures to wade far into it, will soon find himself out of his depth, and in danger to be swallowed up and lost in that great abyss, which is not to be fathomed by the shallow faculties of mortal men.

I shall therefore only mention the

2. Thing I proposed to speak to, viz. the eternity of this happiness; "and the end everlasting life:" by which the apostle intends to express the utmost perfection, but not the final period of the happiness of good men in another world. For to a perfect state of happiness these two conditions are requisite, that it be immutable, and that it be interminable, that it can neither admit of a change nor of an end. And this is all that I shall say of it, it being impossible to say any thing that is more intelligible and plain, concerning that which is infinite, than that it is so. I should now have proceeded to the

II. Thing I proposed, viz. by what way and means we may be prepared, and made meet to be

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made partakers of this happiness; and that is (as I have told you all along) by the constant and sincere endeavour of an holy and good life; for the text supposeth that they only who are "made free from sin," and "become the servants of God," and who "have their fruit unto holiness," are they whose end shall be everlasting life. But this is an argument which I have had so frequent occasion to speak to, that I shall not now meddle with it. All that I shall do more at present shall be to make an inference or two from what hath been said upon this argument.

I. The consideration of the happy state of good men in another world, cannot but be a great comfort and support to good men under all the evils and sufferings of this present life. Hope is a great cordial to the minds of men, especially when the thing hoped for does so vastly outweigh the present grievance and trouble. The holy scriptures, which reveal to us the happiness of our future state, do likewise assure us that there is no comparison between the afflictions and sufferings of good men in this world, and the reward of them in the other. "I reckon (saith St. Paul) Rom. viii. 8. that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."

Particularly the consideration of that glorious change which shall be made in our bodies at the resurrection, ought to be a great comfort to us under all the pains and diseases which they are now liable to, and even against death itself. One of the greatest burdens of human nature, is the frailty and infirmity of our bodies, the necessities which they are frequently press'd withal, the diseases and pains to which they are liable, and "the fear of death," by
reason

reason whereof a great part of mankind are "subject
" to bondage;" against all which this is an everlast-
ing spring of consolation to us, that the time is com-
ing when we shall have other sort of bodies, freed
from that burden of corruption which we now groan
under, and from all those miseries and inconvenien-
cies which flesh and blood are now subject to. For
the time will come, when "these vile bodies," which
we now wear, "shall be changed, and fashioned like
" to the glorious body of the Son of God;" and
when they shall be raised at the last day, they shall
not be raised such as we laid them down, vile and
corruptible, but immortal and incorruptible: for the
same power which hath raised them up to life, shall
likewise change them, and put a glory upon them
like to that of the glorified body of our LORD; and
when this glorious change is made, "when this cor-
ruptible hath put on incorruption, and this mortal
" hath put on immortality, then shall come to pass
" the saying that is written, death is swallowed up
" in victory;" and when this last enemy is perfectly
subdued, we shall be set above all the frailties and
dangers, all the temptations and sufferings of this
mortal state; there will then be no "fleshly lusts"
and brutish passions "to war against the soul;" no
"law in our members" to rise up in rebellion against
"the law of our minds;" no diseases to torment us,
no danger of death to terrify us; all the motions
and passions of our outward man shall then be per-
fectly subject to the reason of our minds, and our
bodies shall partake of the immortality of our souls.
How should this consideration bear us up under all
the evils of life and the fears of death, that the resur-
rection will be a perfect cure of all our infirmities
and diseases, and an effectual remedy of all the evils
that

that we now labour under ; and that it is but a very little while that we shall be troubled with these frail, and mortal, and vile bodies, which shall shortly be laid in the dust, and when they are raised again, shall become spiritual, incorruptible, and glorious.

And if our bodies shall undergo so happy a change, what happiness may we imagine shall then be conferred upon our souls, that so much better and nobler part of ourselves ! as the apostle reasons in another case, “ Doth God take care of oxen ? ” Hath he this consideration of our bodies, which are but the brutish part of the man ? What regard will he then have to his own image, that spark of divinity which is for ever to reside in these bodies ? If upon the account of our souls, and for their sakes, our bodies shall become incorruptible, spiritual and glorious ; then certainly our souls shall be endued with far more excellent and divine qualities : if our bodies shall in some degree partake of the perfection of our souls in their spiritual and immortal nature ; to what a pitch of perfection shall our souls be raised and advanced ! even to an equality with angels, and to some kind of participation of the divine nature and perfection, so far as a creature is capable of them.

II. The comparison which is here in the text, and which I have largely explained, between the manifest inconveniencies of a sinful and vicious course, and the manifold advantages of an holy and virtuous life, is a plain direction to us which of these two to chuse. So that I may make the same appeal that Moses does, after that he had at large declared the blessings promised to the obedience of God’s laws, and the curse denounced against the violation and transgression of them, Deut. xxx. 19. “ I call heaven and earth to record against you this day, that
“ I have

I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore chuse life," that you may be happy in life and death, and after death to all eternity. I know every one is ready to chuse happiness, and to say with Balaam, "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his:" but if we do in good earnest desire the end, we must take the way that leads to it; we must "become the servants of God, and have our fruit unto holiness," if ever we expect, that "the end shall be everlasting life."

S E R M O N CLXVII.

The nature and necessity of holy resolution.

J O B xxxiv. 31, 32.

Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more: That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

TH E S E words are the words of Elihu, one of Job's friends, and the only one who is not reprov'd for his discourse with Job, and who was probably the author of this ancient and most eloquent history of the sufferings and patience of Job, and of the end which the LORD made with him; and they contain in them a description of the temper and behaviour of a true penitent. "Surely it is meet, &c."

In which words we have the two essential parts of a true repentance. First,

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The first
sermon on
this text.

First, An humble acknowledgment and confession of our sins to God, "Surely it is meet to be said
"unto God, I have born chastisement."

Secondly, A firm purpose and resolution of amendment and forsaking of sin for the future, "I
"will not offend any more; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

First, An humble acknowledgment and confession of our sins to God; "Surely it is meet to be said
"unto God, I have born chastisement," that is, have sinned and been justly punished for it, and am now convinced of the evil of sin, and resolved to leave it; "I have born chastisement, I will offend
"no more."

Of this first part of repentance, viz. an humble confession of our sins to God, with great shame and sorrow for them, and a thorough conviction of the evil and danger of a sinful course, I have already treated at large. In these repentance must begin, but it must not end in them: for a penitent confession of our sins to God, and a conviction of the evil of them, signifies nothing, unless it brings us to a resolution of amendment, that is, of leaving our sins, and betaking ourselves to a better course. And this I intend, by God's assistance, to speak to now, as being the

Second part of a true repentance here described in the text, viz. A firm purpose and resolution of amendment and forsaking of sin for the future; and to express it the more strongly and emphatically, and to shew the firmness of the resolution, it is repeated again, "I will not offend any more;" and then in the next verse, "I have done iniquity, I will
"do no more." And this is so necessary a part of repentance, that herein the very essence and formal nature

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nature of repentance does consist, viz. in the firm and sincere purpose and resolution of a better course.

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In the handling of this argument, I shall do these six things.

I. I shall shew what resolution is in general.

II. What is the special object of this kind of resolution.

III. What is implied in a sincere resolution of leaving our sins and returning to God.

IV. I shall shew that in this resolution of amendment, the very essence and formal nature of repentance does consist.

V. I shall offer some considerations to convince men, both of the necessity and fitness of this resolution, and of keeping stedfastly to it. "Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more."

VI. I shall add some brief directions concerning the managing and maintaining of this holy and necessary resolution.

I. What resolution in general is. It is a fix'd determination of the will about any thing, either to do it, or not to do it, as upon due deliberation we have judged and concluded it to be necessary or convenient to be done, or not to be done by us: and this supposeth three things.

1. Resolution supposeth a precedent deliberation of the mind about the thing to be resolved up. For no prudent man does determine or resolve upon any thing, till he have considered the thing, and weighed it well with himself, and have fully debated the necessity and expedience of it; what advantage he shall have by the doing of it, and what danger and inconvenience will certainly or very probably redound to him by the neglect and omission of it. For pe-

remptorily to determine and resolve upon any thing, before a man have done this, is not properly resolution, but precipitancy and rashness.

2. Resolution supposeth some judgment pass'd upon the thing, after a man hath thus deliberated about it ; that he is satisfied in his mind one way or other concerning it, that his understanding is convinced either that it is necessary and convenient for him to do it, or that it is not ; and this is sometimes called resolution, but is not that resolution which immediately determines a man to action. This judgment of the necessity and fitness of the thing is not the resolution of the will, but of the understanding ; for it does not signify that a man hath fully determined to do the thing, but that he hath determined with himself that it is reasonable to be done, and that he is no longer in doubt and suspense whether it be best for him to do it or not, but is in his mind resolved and satisfied one way or other. And these are two very different things ; to be resolved in one's judgment, that is, to be convinced that a thing is fit and necessary to be done, and to be resolved to set upon the doing of it ; for many men are thus convinced of the fitness and necessity of the thing, who yet have not the heart, cannot bring themselves to a firm and fixed resolution to set upon the doing of it. So that an act of the judgment, must go before the resolution of the will : for as he is rash that resolves to do a thing before he hath deliberated about it ; so he is blind and wilful that resolves to do a thing before his judgment be satisfied, whether it be best for him to do it or not.

3. If the matter be of considerable moment and consequence, resolution supposeth some motion of the affections ; which is a kind of bias upon the will,

will, a certain propension and inclination that a man feels in himself, either urging him to do a thing, or withdrawing him from it. Deliberation and judgment, they direct a man what to do, or leave undone; the affections excite and quicken a man to take some resolution in the matter, that is, to do suitably to the judgment his mind hath pass'd upon the thing. For instance; a great sinner reflects upon his life, and considers what he hath done, what the course is that he lives in, and what the issue and consequence of it will probably or certainly be, whether it will make him happy or miserable in the conclusion; and debating the matter calmly and soberly with himself, he is satisfied and convinced of the evil and danger of a wicked life, and consequently that it is best for him to resolve upon a better course, that is, to repent. Now these thoughts must needs awaken in him fearful apprehensions of the wrath of Almighty God, which is due to him for his sins and hangs over him, and which he is every moment in danger of, if he goes on in his evil course. These thoughts are apt likewise to fill him with shame and confusion, at the remembrance of his horrible ingratitude to God his maker, his best friend and greatest benefactor, and of his desperate folly in provoking omnipotent justice against himself; whereupon he is heartily grieved and troubled for what he hath done; and these affections of fear and shame and sorrow being once up, they come with great violence upon the will, and urge the man to a speedy resolution of changing his course, and leaving the way he is in, which he is fully convinced is so evil and dangerous; and of betaking himself to another course, which he is fully satisfied will be much more for his safety and advantage.

So that resolution in general, is a fix'd determination of the will; that is, such a determination as is not only for the present free from all wavering and doubting, but such as cannot prudently be altered, so long as reason remains. For the man who upon full deliberation and conviction of his mind resolves upon any thing, cannot without the imputation of fickleness and inconstancy quit that resolution, so long as he hath the same reason which he had when he took it up, and is still satisfied that the reason is good. For instance; The man who hath taken up a resolution to be sober, because of the ugliness and unreasonableness of drunkenness, and the temporal inconveniencies and eternal damnation which that sin exposeth a man to; if these reasons be true and good, can never prudently alter the resolution which he hath taken, and return to that sin again.

II. Let us consider what is the special object or matter of this resolution, wherein the formal nature of repentance does consist, what it is that a man when he repents resolves upon; and that I told you is to leave his sin, and to return to God and his duty; and this is the resolution which the penitent here described in the text takes up, "I will not offend any more. That which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more." He resolves against all known sin, "I will not offend any more;" and if through ignorance he had sinned and done contrary to his duty, he desires to be better instructed, that he may not offend again in the like kind, "That which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

So that the true penitent resolves upon these two things.

1. To forsake his sin. And

2. To return to God and his duty.

1. To

1. To forsake his sin : and this implies the quitting of his sinful course whatever it had been ; and that not only by abstaining from the outward act and practice of every sin, but by endeavouring to crucify and subdue the inward affection and inclination to it.

And it implies farther, the utter forsaking of sin ; for repentance is not only a resolution to abstain from sin for the present, but never to return to it again. Thus Ephraim, when he repented of his idolatry, he utterly renounced it, saying, “ What have I to do “ any more with idols ? ” Hof. xiv. 8. He that truly repents, is resolved to break off his sinful course, and to abandon those lusts and vices which he was formerly addicted to, and lived in.

2. The true penitent resolves likewise to return to God and his duty : he does not stay in the negative part of religion, he does not only resolve not to commit any sin, but not to neglect or omit any thing that he knows to be his duty ; and if he has been ignorant of any part of his duty, he is willing to know it, that he may do it ; he is not only determined to forsake his sin, which will make him miserable, but to return to God, who alone can make him happy : he is now resolved to love God, and to serve him as much as he hated and dishonoured him before ; and will now be as diligent to perform and practise all the duties and parts of religion, as he was negligent of them before, and as ready to do all the good he can to all men in any kind, as he was careless of these things before : these in general are the things which a true penitent resolves upon. I proceed to the

III. Thing I proposed to consider, namely what is implied in a sincere resolution of leaving our sins,
and

and returning to God and our duty. And this holy resolution, if it be thorough and sincere, does imply in it these three things.

1. That it be universal.
2. That it be a resolution of the means as well as of the end.
3. That it presently comes to effect, and be speedily and without delay put in execution.

1. A sincere resolution of amendment must be universal: a resolution to forsake all sin, and to return to our whole duty, and every part of it; such a resolution as that of holy David, "to hate every false way, " and to have respect to all God's commandments."

This resolution must be universal in respect of the whole man, and with regard to all our actions. In respect of the whole man; for we must resolve not only to abstain from the outward action of sin, but this resolution must have it's effect upon our inward man, and reach our very hearts and thoughts; it must restrain our inclinations, and "mortify our lusts and corrupt affections, and renew us in the very spirit of " our minds," as the apostle expresses it.

And it must be universal, in respect of all our actions. For this is not the resolution of a sincere penitent, to abstain only from gross and notorious, from scandalous and open sins; but likewise to refrain from the commission of those sins which are small in the esteem of men, and not branded with a mark of publick infamy and reproach; to forbear sin in secret, and when no eye of man sees us and takes notice of us. This is not a sincere resolution, to resolve to practise the duties and virtues of religion in publick, and to neglect them in private; to resolve to perform the duties of the first table, and to pass by those of the second; to resolve to serve God,
and

and to take a liberty to defraud and cozen men ; to honour our father which is heaven, and to injure and hate our brethren upon earth ; “ to love our neighbour, and to hate our enemy,” as the Jews did of old time ; to resolve against swearing, and to allow ourselves the liberty to speak falsely, and to break our word ; to flee from superstition, and to run into faction ; to abhor idols, and to commit sacrilege ; to resolve to be devout at church, and deceitful in our shops ; to be very scrupulous about lesser matters, and to be very zealous about indifferent things ; “ to tithe mint and anise and cummin, “ and to omit the weightier matters of the law, “ mercy and fidelity and justice ;” to be very rigid in matters of faith and opinion, but loose in life and practice.

No ; the resolution of a sincere penitent must be universal and uniform : it must extend alike to the forbearing of all sin, and the exercise of every grace and virtue, and to the due practice and performance of every part of our duty. The true penitent must resolve for the future to abstain from all sin, “ to be “ holy in all manner of conversation, and to abound “ in all the fruits of righteousness, which by JESUS “ CHRIST are to the praise and glory of God.” For if a man do truly repent of his wicked life, there is the very same reason why he should resolve against all sin, as why he should resolve against any ; why he should observe all the commandments of God, as why he should keep any one of them. For as St. James reasons concerning him that wilfully breaks any one commandment of God, that “ he is guilty “ of all, and breaks the whole law ;” because the authority of God is equally stampd upon all his laws, and is violated and contemned by the wilful transgression

tion of any one of them; "For he that hath said, "thou shalt not kill, hath likewise said, thou shalt not commit adultery, and thou shalt not steal:" so he that resolves against any one sin, or upon performance of any one part of his duty, ought for the very same reason to make his resolution universal; because one sin is evil and provoking to God, as well as another; and the performance of one part of our duty good and pleasing to him, as well as another, and there is no difference. So that he that resolves against any sin, upon wise and reasonable grounds, because of the evil of it, and the danger of the wrath of God to which it exposeth us, ought for the same reason to resolve against all sin; because it is damnable to commit adultery, and to steal, as well as to kill; and that resolution against sin, which is not universal, it is a plain case that it is not true and sincere, and that it was not taken up out of the sense of the intrinsical evil of sin, and the danger of it in respect of God and the judgment of another world; (for this reason holds against every sin, and remains always the same) but that it was taken up upon some inferior consideration, either because of the shame and infamy of it among men, or because of some other temporal inconvenience, which if the man could be secured against, he would presently break his resolution, and return to the commission of that sin, with as much freedom as any other.

2. A sincere resolution implies a resolution of the means as well as of the end. He that is truly and honestly resolved against any sin, is likewise resolved to avoid as much as is possible the occasions and temptations which may lead or draw him to that sin; or if they happen to present themselves to him, he is resolved to stand upon his guard, and to resist them.

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In like manner he that sincerely resolves upon doing his duty in any kind, must resolve upon the means that are requisite and necessary to the due discharge and performance of that duty. As he that resolves against that needless and useless sin of swearing in common conversation, must resolve also "to set a guard before the door of his lips," seeing it is certain that it requires great care and attention, at least for some competent time, to get rid of a habit.

When David resolved "not to offend with his tongue," he resolved at the same time to be very watchful over himself, Psal. xxxix. 1. "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth as with a bridle, while the wicked is before me." For a man to resolve against any sin or vice, and yet to involve himself continually in the occasions, and to run himself into the company and temptations, which do naturally, and will almost necessarily lead and betray him into those sins, is a plain evidence of insincerity. This I take for a certain rule, that whatever can reasonably move a man to resolve upon any end, will, if his resolution be sincere and honest, determine him every whit as strongly to use all those means which are necessary in order to that end. But of this I have spoken elsewhere.

3. A sincere resolution of leaving our sins, and returning to God and our duty, does imply the present time, and that we are to resolve speedily and without delay to put this resolution in practice; that we are preremptorily determined not to go one step farther in the ways of sin, not to neglect any duty that God requires of us, not for one moment; but immediately and forthwith to set upon the practice of it, so soon as occasion and opportunity is offer'd

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to us. And the reason of this is evident; because the very same considerations that prevail upon any man to take up this resolution of amendment, and changing the course of his life, are every whit as prevalent to engage him to put this resolution presently in practice and execution.

I deny not, but a man may resolve upon a thing for the future, and when the time comes may execute his resolution, and this resolution may for all that be very sincere and real, though it was delayed to a certain time; because he did not see reason to resolve to do the thing sooner: but it cannot be so in this case of repentance; because there can no good reason be imagined, why a man should resolve seven years hence to change his course, and break off his sinful life, but the very same reason will hold as strongly, why he should do it presently and without delay; and over and besides this, there are a great many and powerful reasons and considerations, why he should rather put this good resolution in present execution, than put it off and defer it to any farther time whatsoever.

What is it that puts thee upon this resolution of leaving thy sins, and urgeth thee to do it at all? Art thou resolved to leave sin, because it is so great an evil? Why it is so for the present; the evil of it is intrinsic to it, and cleaves to the very nature of it, and is never to be separated from it: so that this is a present reason, and as strong against it now, as ever it will be hereafter: nay it is stronger at present; because if it be so great an evil, the sooner we leave it, the better.

Or dost thou resolve to forsake sin, because thou art apprehensive of the danger and mischief of it, that it will expose thee to the wrath of God, and to the

the endless and intolerable misery of another world? SERM.
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Why this reason likewise makes much more for the present leaving of it: because the longer thou continuest in a sinful and impenitent state, the greater is thy danger, and the greater penalty thou wilt most certainly incur; by delaying to put this good resolution in practice, thou dost increase and multiply the causes of thy fear. For hereby thou provokest God more, and every day dost incense his wrath more and more against thee; thou preparest more and more fuel for "everlasting burnings," and "treasurest up for thy self more wrath, against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." Nay thou dost not only increase and aggravate, but thou dost hereby hasten thine own misery and ruin, and takest the most effectual course that is possible, to bring thine own fears, and the vengeance of Almighty God, so much the sooner upon thee. For nothing provokes God to take a speedier course with sinners, and does more quicken the pace of his judgments, than wilful continuance in sin.

And yet farther; if thy resolution be valuable and considerable to thee, thou takest the most effectual course in the world to frustrate and defeat it. Thou art fully resolved to leave thy sins hereafter, and thou thinkest thou hast reason for it: but by continuing in them for the present, thou provokest the justice of Almighty God to cut thee off, before thy resolution hath taken effect.

Again; dost thou resolve to leave thy sins one time or other, because thereby thou hopest to put thy self into a capacity of pardon and mercy, and of eternal life and happiness? Why this reason should move thee to do the thing as soon as is possible; be-

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cause the sooner thou forsakest thy sins, thou hast the greater hope of finding mercy and forgiveness with God; and the sooner thou beginnest a holy course, and the longer thou continuest therein, thou hast reason to expect a greater and more ample reward. Thou canst not by holding off hope to bring down pardon and mercy to lower rates, and to obtain these hereafter upon easier terms: No; the terms and conditions of God's mercy are already fixed and established, so as never to be altered.

So that whatever reason thou canst possibly alledge for taking up this resolution, it is every whit as forcible and powerful to persuade thee to put it speedily in execution.

And then there is this reason besides, and that a very considerable one, why thou shouldest immediately put this resolution in practice, and not delay it for a moment. Thou mayest at present do it much more certainly, and much more easily. Much more certainly; because thou art surer of the present time, than thou canst be of the future. The present is in thy power, but not one moment more. And thou mayest at present do it more easily; for the longer thou continuest in sin, thy resolution against it will still grow weaker, and the habit of sin continually stronger. Thou wilt every day be more enslaved by the power of thy lusts, and thy heart will every day be more "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." All the change that time makes will still be for the worse, and more to thy disadvantage. Sin will be as pleasant to thee hereafter, and thou more loth to leave it, than at present. Sin was never mortified by age. It will every day have more strength to bind thee and hold thee fast, and thou wilt have every day less to break loose from it. For

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by every sin thou dost commit, thou addest a new degree to the strength and force of it; and so much strength as thou addest to it, so much thou takest from thy self, and so much thou lovest of thine own power and liberty. For a man and his lusts are like nature and disease: so much strength as the disease gains, nature loseth, and the man is hereby doubly weakened: for he does not only lose so much of his own strength, but the enemy gets it.

Nay thou dost hereby likewise forfeit that auxiliary strength and assistance which the grace of God is ready to afford to men, his restraining and his preventing grace. For as a man goes on in sin, and advanceth in an evil course, the grace of God draws off by degrees, and his Holy Spirit doth insensibly leave him: and when a sinner is come to this, his best resolutions will “vanish like the morning cloud” and the early dew which passeth away.”

So that it cannot be a true and sincere resolution of leaving our sins, if it do not take place and have not it's effect presently. For there is no man that takes up a resolution, upon weighty and considerable reasons, of doing any thing; but if the reasons upon which he takes it up urge him to do the thing at present, he will presently set about it: and that man is not resolved to do a thing, whatever he may pretend, who hath most reason to do it at present, and may best do it now, and yet delays it.

And thus I have opened to you the nature of this holy resolution of leaving our sins, and returning to God and our duty; and have shewn what is necessarily implied in such a resolution, if it be sincere and in good earnest; that it be universal; and that it be a resolution of the means, as well as of the end; and that it presently take place and be put in execution.

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tion. And these are three the best signs and marks that I know of, whereby a man may try and examine the truth and sincerity of that resolution of amendment, which we call repentance. If it be against all sin, and have an equal regard to every part of our duty; if when we resolve upon the end, that is, to avoid sin, and to perform our duty, we are equally resolved upon the means that are necessary to those ends; if the resolution we have taken up commence presently, and from that day forward be duly executed and put in practice, then is our repentance and resolution of amendment sincere: but if there be a defect in any of these, our resolution is not as it ought to be.

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The nature and necessity of holy resolution.

JOB xxxiv. 31, 32.

Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more: That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

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Thesecond
sermon on
this text.

TH E S E words are the description of the temper and behaviour of a true penitent, and do contain in them the two essential parts of a true repentance.

First, An humble acknowlegment and confession of sin.

Secondly,

Secondly, A firm purpose and resolution of amendment and forsaking our sins for the future.

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And this latter is so necessary a part of repentance, that herein the very essence and formal nature of repentance does consist. In handling of this argument, I proposed to consider,

I. What resolution in general is.

II. What is the special object or matter of this kind of resolution.

III. What is implied in a sincere resolution of leaving our sins, and returning to God and our duty.

IV. To shew that in this resolution of amendment, the very essence and formal nature of repentance doth consist.

V. To offer some considerations to convince men of the necessity and fitness of this resolution, and of keeping stedfast to it.

VI. To add some directions concerning the managing and maintaining this holy resolution. The three first I have spoken to, I now proceed to the

IV. To shew that in this resolution the very essence and formal nature of repentance doth consist. A man may do many reasonable actions, without an explicit resolution. In things that are more easy and natural to us, judgment and resolution are all one; it is all one to judge a thing fit to be done, and to resolve to do it. But in matters of difficulty, when a man is to strive against the stream, and to oppose strong habits that have taken deep root, there is nothing to be done without an explicit resolution. No man makes any remarkable change in his life, so as to cross his inclinations and custom, without an express resolution. For though a man's judgment be never so much convinced of the reasonableness and necessity of such a change; yet unless a man's spirit be

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be fortified and fix'd by resolution, the power of custom, and the violence of his own inclinations will carry him against his judgment. Now there is no change of a man's life can be imagined, wherein a man offers greater violence to inveterate habits, and to the strong propensions of his present temper, than in this of repentance. So that among all the actions of a man's life, there is none that doth more necessarily require an exprefs purpose, than repentance does.

And that herein repentance doth chiefly consist, I shall endeavour to make evident from scripture, and from the common apprehensions of mankind concerning repentance.

The scripture, besides the several descriptions of repentance, useth two words to exprefs it to us, *μεταμέλεια* and *μετάνοια*. The former properly signifies the inward trouble and displeasure which men conceive against themselves, for having done amiss; which if it be *κατὰ Θεὸν λύπη*, "a godly sorrow," it worketh in us *μετάνοιαν ἀμεταμέλητον*, as St. Paul calls it, "a repentance not to be repented of," that is, such a change of our minds, which as we shall have no cause to be troubled at, so no reason to alter afterwards. And what is this, but a firm, stedfast, and unalterable resolution?

The scripture likewise useth several phrases of the like importance to describe repentance by; as forsaking and turning from sin, and conversion and turning to God. Forsaking and turning from sin. Hence it is called "repentance from dead works," Heb. vi. 1. and turning to God, Acts xxvi. 20. "I have shewed to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God," that is, from the worship of idols to the true God. And we have both these together in the description which the prophet gives of repentance,

ance, Isa. lv. 7. "Let the wicked forsake his ways,
" and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let
" him return unto the LORD." Now this change
begins in the sinner's resolution of doing this; and
the "unrighteous man's forsaking his thoughts," is
nothing else but changing the purpose of his mind,
and resolving upon a better course. And thus Lac-
tantius describes it: *Agere autem pœnitentiam nihil
aliud est, quam affirmare & profiteri se non amplius
peccaturum.* "To repent is nothing else, but for a
" man to declare and profess that he will sin no
" more." This is repentance before men. And
repentance before GOD is a resolution answerable to
this profession. And elsewhere saith the same author,
"The Greeks do most fully express repentance by
" the word μετάνοια, because he that repents reco-
" vers his mind from his former folly, and is trou-
" bled at it;" & *confirmat animam suam ad rectius
vivendum,* "and confirms his mind for a better
" course." And how is this done but by resolution?

And that this is the natural and true notion of re-
pentance appears, in that the heathens did consent
and agree in it. Gellius gives this description of it.
*Pœnitere tum dicere solemus, cum quæ ipsi fecimus, ea
nobis post incipiunt displicere, sententiamque in iis
nostram demutamus.* "We are said then to repent,
" when those things which we have done begin af-
" terwards to displease us, and we change our reso-
" lution about them." And so likewise one of the
philosophers describes it; "repentance is the begin-
" ning of philosophy, a flying from foolish words
" and actions, καὶ τῆς ἀμελεμένης ζωῆς ἢ πρώτης
" παρασκευῆς, and the first preparation of a life not
" to be repented of."

It is true indeed, repentance supposeth the entire
change

change of our lives and actions, and a continued state, as the proper consequence of it : but repentance is but the beginning of this change, which takes its rise from the purpose and resolution of our minds ; and if it be sincere and firm, it will certainly have this effect, to change our lives ; and if it be not so, it is not repentance. For though in the nature of the thing it be possible, that a man may sincerely resolve upon a thing, and yet let fall his resolution afterwards, before it come into act : yet in the phrase of scripture, nothing is called repentance, but such a resolution as takes effect, so soon as there is opportunity for it. If we change our resolution, and repent of our repentance, this is not that which St. Paul calls “ repentance unto salvation.” So that no man that reads and considers the bible, can impose upon himself so grossly, as to conceit himself a true penitent, and consequently to be in a state of salvation, who hath been troubled for his sins, and hath taken up a resolution to leave them, if he do not pursue this resolution, and act according to it.

V. I shall in the next place propound some arguments and considerations to persuade men to this holy resolution, and then to keep them firm and stedfast to it, so as never to change it after they have once taken it up.

First, I shall propound some arguments to persuade men to take up this resolution ; and they are these.

I. Consider that this resolution of repentance, is nothing but what, under the influence of God’s grace and holy Spirit, which are never wanting to the sincere endeavours of men, is in your power. And it is necessary to premise this ; for unless this be cleared, all the other arguments that I can use will signify nothing.

thing. For nothing in the world could be more vain, than to take a great deal of pains to persuade men to do a thing which they cannot do, to entreat them to attempt an impossibility, and to urge and solicit them with all earnestness and importunity to do that which is absolutely and altogether out of their power. All the commands of God, and the exhortations of his word, and all the promises and threatenings, whereby these commands and exhortations are enforced, do plainly suppose, either that it is in our power to do the thing which God commands or exhorts us to: or else, if it be not (which I grant it is not) that God is ready by his grace and strength, if we be not wanting to ourselves, to assist and enable us to those ends and purposes. For the gospel supposeth a power going along with it, and that the holy Spirit of God works upon the minds of men, to quicken and excite and assist them to their duty. And if it were not so, the exhortations of preachers would be nothing else, but a cruel and bitter mocking of sinners, and an ironical insulting over the misery and weakness of poor creatures; and for ministers to preach, or people to hear sermons, upon other terms, would be the vainest expence of time, and the idlest thing we do all the week; and all our dissuaves from sin, and exhortations to holiness and a good life, and vehement persuasions of men to strive to get to heaven and to escape hell, would be just as if one should urge a blind man, by many reasons and arguments taken from the advantages of sight, and the comfort of that sense, and the beauty of external objects, by all means to open his eyes, and to behold the delights of nature, to see his way, and to look to his steps; and should upbraid him, and be very angry with him for not doing so. Why, if resolu-

tion be absolutely impossible to us, and a thing wholly out of our power, it is just the same case. But then we ought to deal plainly and openly with men, and to tell them, that what we so earnestly persuade them to, is that which we certainly know they cannot do. So that it is necessary, if I intend that the following considerations should do any good, to assure men, that it is not impossible for them to make a resolution of leaving their sins, and returning to God.

It is a power which every man is naturally invested withal, to consider, and judge, and chuse. To consider, that is, to weigh and compare things together. To judge, that is, to determine which is best. And to chuse, that is, to resolve to do it or not. And there is nothing more evident and more universally acknowledged in temporal cases, and in the affairs and concernments of this life. In these matters resolution is a thing ordinary and of frequent practice; it is the principle of all great and considerable actions. Men resolve to be great in this world, and by virtue of this resolution, when they have once taken it up, what industry will they not use! what hazards will they not run in the pursuit of their ambitious designs! difficulties and dangers do rather whet their courage, and set an edge upon their spirits. Men resolve to be rich; the apostle speaks of some that will be rich, 1 Tim. vi. "they that will be rich: and though this be but a low and mean design, yet these persons, by virtue of this resolution, will toil and take prodigious pains in it.

And as to spiritual things, every man hath the same power radically, that is, he hath the faculties of understanding and will; but these are obstructed and hindered in their exercise, and strongly biassed a contrary way by the power of evil inclinations

tions and habits ; so that as to the exercise of this power and the effect of it in spiritual things, men are in a sort as much disabled, as if they were destitute of it. For it is in effect all one, to have no understanding at all to consider things that are spiritual, as to have the understanding blinded by an invincible prejudice ; to have no liberty as to spiritual things, as to have the will strongly biased against them. For a man that hath this prejudice upon his understanding, and this bias upon his will, is to all intents and purposes as if he were destitute of these faculties. But then we are not to understand this impotency to be absolutely natural, but accidental ; not to be in the first frame and constitution of our souls, but to have happened upon the depravation of nature. It is not a want of natural faculties, but the binding of them up and hindering their operations to certain purposes. This impotency proceeds from the power of evil habits. And thus the scripture expresseth it, and compares an impotency arising from bad habits and customs to a natural impossibility ; nothing coming nearer to nature, than a powerful custom. " Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? Then may ye also, that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well."

But now GOD by the gospel hath designed the recovery of mankind from the slavery of sin, and the power of their lusts ; and therefore, as by the death of CHRIST he hath provided a way to remove the guilt of sin, so by the spirit of CHRIST he furnisheth us with sufficient power to destroy the dominion of sin. I say sufficient, if we be not wanting to ourselves, but be " workers together with God," and be as diligent " to work out our own salvation," as he is ready " to work in us both to will and to do."

So

So that when we persuade men to repent and change their lives, and to resolve upon a better course, we do not exhort them to any thing that is absolutely out of their power; but to what they may do, though not of themselves, yet by the grace of God, which is always ready to assist them, unless by their former gross neglects and long obstinacy in an evil course, they have provoked God to withdraw his grace from them. So that though, considering our own strength abstractedly, and separately from the grace of God, these things be not in our power; yet the grace of God puts them into our power.

And this is so far from derogating from the grace of God, that it is highly to the praise of it. For if the grace of God makes us able to repent and resolve upon a new life, he that asserts this does not attribute his repentance to himself, but to the grace of God: nay he that says that God's grace excites, and is ready to assist men to do what God commands, represents God immensely more good and gracious, than he that says that God commands men to do that which by their natural power they cannot do, and will condemn them for not doing it, and yet denies them that grace which is necessary to the doing of it.

Let this then be established as a necessary consideration to prevent discouragement, that to resolve upon the change of our lives, is that which by the grace of God we are enabled to do, if we will. Resolution is no strange and extraordinary thing; it is one of the most common acts that belongs to us as we are men; but we do not ordinarily apply it to the best purposes. It is not so ordinary for men to resolve to be good, as to be rich and great; not so common for men to resolve against sin, as to resolve against poverty and suffering. It is not
so

so usual for men to resolve to keep a good conscience, as to keep a good place. Indeed our corrupt nature is much more opposite to this holy kind of resolution. But then to balance and answer this, God hath promised greater and more immediate assistance to us in this case, than in any other. There is a general blessing and common assistance promised to resolution and diligence about temporal things; and God's providence doth often advance such persons to riches and honour. The diligent hand, with God's blessing, makes rich, as Solomon tells us, Prov. x. 4. and xxii. 29. Seest thou" (says he) "a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings, he shall not stand before mean men." Now diligence is the effect of a great and vigorous resolution. But there is a special and extraordinary blessing and assistance, that attends the resolution and endeavour of a holy life. God hath not promised to strengthen men with all might in the way to riches and honours, and to assist the ambitious and covetous designers of this world, with "a mighty and glorious power, such as raised up Jesus from the dead:" but this he hath promised to those, who with a firm purpose and resolution do engage in the ways of religion. Let us then shake off our sloth and listlessness, and in that strength and assistance which God offers, let us resolve to leave our sins, and to amend our lives.

2. Consider what it is that you are to resolve upon; to leave your sins, and to return to God and goodness. So that the things I am persuading you to resolve upon are the strongest reasons that can be for such a resolution. Sin is such a thing, that there can be no better argument to make men resolve against it, than to consider what it is, and to think seriously

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2. Consider what it is that you are to resolve upon; to leave your sins, and to return to God and goodness. So that the things I am persuading you to resolve upon are the strongest reasons that can be for such a resolution. Sin is such a thing, that there can be no better argument to make men resolve against it, than to consider what it is, and to think seriously

seriously of the nature and consequence of it. And
 { GOD and goodness are so amiable and desirable, that
 the very proposal of these objects hath invitations
 and allurements enough to inflame our desires after
 them, and to make us rush into the embraces of
 them. If we would but enter into the serious con-
 sideration of them, we should soon be resolved in
 our minds about them.

Do but consider a little what sin is. It is the
 shame and blemish of thy nature, the reproach and
 disgrace of thy understanding and reason, the great
 deformity and disease of thy soul, and the eternal
 enemy of thy rest and peace. It is thy shackles and
 thy fetters, the tyrant that oppresses thee and re-
 strains thee of thy liberty, and condemns thee to the
 basest slavery and the vilest drudgery. It is the un-
 natural and violent state of thy soul, the worm that
 perpetually gnaws thy conscience, the cause of all
 fears and troubles, and of all the evils and miseries,
 all the mischiefs and disorders that are in the world ;
 it is the foundation and fuel of hell ; it is that
 which puts thee out of the possession and enjoyment of
 thyself, which doth alienate and separate thee from
 God the fountain of bliss and happiness, which pro-
 vokes him to be thine enemy, and lays thee open
 every moment to the fierce revenge of his justice,
 and if thou dost persist and continue in it, will final-
 ly sink and oppress thee under the insupportable
 weight of his wrath, and make thee so weary of
 thyself, that thou shalt wish a thousand times that
 thou hadst never been ; and will render thee so per-
 fectly miserable, that thou wouldest esteem it a great
 happiness to exchange thy condition with the most
 wretched and forlorn person that ever lived upon
 earth, to be perpetually upon a rack, and to lie
 down

down for ever under the rage of all the most violent diseases and pains that ever afflicted mankind. Sin is all this which I have described, and will certainly bring upon thee all those evils and mischiefs which I have mentioned, and make thee far more miserable than I am able to express, or thou to conceive. And art thou not yet resolved to leave it? Shall I need to use any other arguments to set thee against it, and to take thee off from the love and practice of it, than this representation which I have now made of the horrible nature and consequences of it?

And then consider on the other hand, what it is that I am persuading thee to turn to; to thy God and duty. And would not this be a blessed change indeed! To leave the greatest evil, and to return to the chief good! For this resolution of returning to God, is nothing else but a resolution to be wise and happy, and to put thyself into the possession of that which is a greater good, if it is possible, than sin is an evil, and will render thee more happy, than sin can make thee miserable. Didst thou but think what God is, and what he will be to thee if thou wilt return to him, how kindly he will receive thee after all thy wandrings from him days without number, thou wouldst soon take up the resolution of the prodigal, and say, "I will arise and go to my father."

And consider likewise what it is to return to thy duty. It is nothing else but to do what becomes thee, and what is suitable to the original frame of thy nature, and to the truest dictates of thy reason and conscience, and what is not more thy duty, than it is thy interest and thy happiness. For that which God requires of us, is to be righteous and holy and good, that is, to be like God himself, who is the pattern of all perfection and happiness. It is to have

our lives conformed to his will, which is always perfect holiness and goodness, a state of peace and tranquillity, and the very temper and disposition of happiness. It is that which is a principal and most essential ingredient into the felicity of the divine nature, and without which God would not be what he is, but a deformed and imperfect and miserable being.

And if this be a true representation which I have made to you, of sin and vice on the one hand, and of God and goodness on the other, what can be more powerful than the serious consideration of it, to engage us to a speedy resolution of leaving our sins, and of “turning and cleaving to the LORD with full purpose of heart?” After this we cannot but conclude with the penitent in the text; “Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I will not offend any more: that which I see not, teach thou me; and if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.”

3. Consider how unreasonable it is to be unresolved in a case of so great moment and concernment. There is no greater argument of a man’s weakness, than irresolution in matters of mighty consequence, when both the importance of the thing, and exigency of present circumstances require a speedy resolution. We should account it a strange folly, for a man to be unresolved in the clearest and plainest matters that concern his temporal welfare and safety. If a man could not determine himself whether he should eat or starve; if he were dangerously sick, and could not determine whether he should take physick or die; or if one that were in prison, could not resolve himself whether he should accept of liberty, and be content to be released; or if a fair estate were offered to him, he should desire seven years time

to consider whether he should take it or not : this would be so absurd in the common affairs of life, that a man would be thought infatuated, that should be doubtful and unresolved in cases so plain, and of such pressing concernment. If a man were under the sentence and condemnation of the law, and liable to be executed upon the least intimation of the prince's pleasure, and a pardon were graciously offered to him, with this intimation, that this would probably be the last offer of mercy that ever would be made to him ; one would think that in this case a man should soon be determined what to do, or rather that he should not need to deliberate at all about it ; because there is no danger of rashness in making haste to save his life.

And yet the case of a sinner is of far greater importance, and much more depends upon it, infinitely more than any temporal concernment whatsoever can amount to, even our happiness or misery to all eternity. And can there be any difficulty, for a man to be resolved what is to be done in such a case ? No case surely in the world can be plainer than this ; whether a man should leave his sins, and return to God and his duty, or not ; that is, whether a man should chuse to be happy or miserable, unspeakably and everlastingly happy, or extremely and eternally miserable.

And the circumstances and exigencies of our case do call for a speedy and peremptory resolution in this matter. The sentence of the law is already past, and God may execute it upon thee every moment, and it is great mercy and forbearance not to do it. Thy life is uncertain, and thou art liable every minute to be snatched away and hurried out of this world. However at the best, thou hast but a little time to

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resolve in ; death and judgment and eternity cannot be far off, and for ought thou knowest they may be even at the door. Thou art upon the matter just ready to be seized upon by death, to be summoned to judgment, and to be swallowed up of eternity: and is it not yet time, thinkest thou, to resolve? Wouldst thou have yet a little longer time to deliberate, whether thou shouldst repent and forsake thy sins, or not? If there were difficulty in the case, or if there were no danger in the delay; if thou couldst gain time, or any thing else, by suspending thy resolution; there were then some reason why thou shouldst not make a sudden determination. But thou canst pretend none of these. It is evident at first sight, what is best to be done, and nothing can make it plainer. It is not a matter so clear and out of the controversy, that riches are better than poverty, and ease better than pain, and life more desirable than death; as it is, that it is better to break off our sins, than to continue in the practice of them; to be reconciled to God, than to go on to provoke him; to be holy and virtuous, than to be wicked and vicious; to be "heirs of eternal glory," than to be "vessels of wrath fitted for destruction."

And there is infinite danger in these delays. For if thy soul be any thing to thee, thou ventur'est that; if thou hast any tenderness and regard for thy eternal interest, thou runnest the hazard of that; if heaven and hell be any thing to thee, thou incurr'est the danger of losing the one, and falling into the other.

And thou gainest nothing by continuing unresolv'ed. If death and judgment would tarry thy leisure, and wait till thou hadst brought thy thoughts to some issue, and were resolved what to do, it were something: but thy irresolution in this matter will be

be so far from keeping back death and judgment, that it will both hasten and aggravate them, both make them to come the sooner, and to be the heavier when they come: because thou abusest the goodness of God, and “despise his patience and “long-suffering, which should lead thee” and draw thee on “to repentance,” and not keep thee back. Hereby thou encouragest thyself in thy lewd and riotous courses, and, because thy “LORD delayeth his “coming,” art the more negligent and extravagant. Hear what doom our LORD pronounceth upon such slothful and wicked servants, Luke xii. 46. “the LORD “of that servant will come in a day when he looketh “not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, “and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him “his portion with the unbelievers.” None so like to be surprized, and to be severely handled by the justice of God, as those that trifle with his patience.

4. Consider how much resolution would tend to the settling of our minds, and making our lives comfortable. There is nothing that perplexeth and disquieteth a man more, than to be unresolved in the great and important concernments of his life. What anxiety and confusion is there in our spirits, whilst we are doubtful and undetermined about such matters? How are we divided and distracted, when our reason and judgment direct us one way; and our lusts and affections bias us to the contrary? When we are convinced and satisfied what is best for us; and yet are disaffected to our own interest. Such a man is all the while self-condemned, and acts with the perpetual regret of his reason and conscience; and whenever he reflects upon himself, he is offended and angry with himself, his life and all his actions are uneasy and displeasing to him; and there is no way

way for this man to be at peace, but to put an end to this conflict one way or other, either by conquering his reason or his will. The former is very difficult, nothing being harder than for a sinner to lay his conscience asleep, after it is once thoroughly awakened; he may charm it for a while, but every little occasion will rouse it again, and renew his trouble; so that though a man may have some truce with his conscience, yet he can never come to a firm and settled peace this way: but if by a vigorous resolution a man would but conquer his will, his mind would be at rest, and there would be a present calm in his spirit. And why should we be such enemies to our own peace, and to the comfort and contentment of our lives, as not to take this course, and thereby rid ourselves at once of that, which really and at the bottom is the ground of all the trouble and disquiet of our lives?

S E R M O N CLXIX.

The nature and necessity of holy resolution.

JOB xxxiv. 31, 32.

Surely it is meet to be said unto GOD, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more: That which I see not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

SERM.
CLXIX.

The third
sermon on
this text.

TH E S E words are a description of the temper and behaviour of a true penitent, his confession of sins, and resolution of amendment. Concerning

cerning resolution I have shewn what it is in general: S E R M.
CLXIX.
What is the special object or matter of this kind of resolution: What is implied in a sincere resolution of leaving our sins, and returning to God and our duty: That in this resolution the very essence and formal nature of repentance doth consist: and have offered some considerations, to convince men of the necessity and fitness of this resolution, and to keep them steadfast to it. As,

1. That this resolution is nothing but what under the influence of God's grace is in our power.

2. The things themselves, which we are to resolve upon, are the strongest arguments that can be for such a resolution.

3. How unreasonable it is for men to be unresolved in a case of so great moment.

4. How much this resolution will tend to the settling of our minds, and making our lives comfortable. I proceed to the considerations which remain.

5. Then be pleased to consider, that a strong and vigorous resolution would make the whole work of religion easy to us, it would conquer all difficulties which attend a holy and religious course of life, especially at our first entrance into it: Because resolution brings our minds to a point, and unites all the strength and force of our souls in one great design, and makes us vigorous and firm, courageous and constant in the prosecution of it; and without this it is impossible to hold out long, and to resist the strong propensions and inclinations of our corrupt nature, which, if we be not firmly resolved, will return and by degrees gain upon us; it will be impossible to break through temptations, and to gain-say the importunity of them; when the devil and the world solicit us, we shall not be able to say them nay, but shall be apt to yield to them. There

There are many, who have had faint wishes and cold desires, and half purposes of leading a new and better life: but having not taken up a firm resolution in the case, having not determined themselves by a severe purpose, a little thing sways them, and brings them back to their former course; it is no hard matter to divert them and engage them another way; they are "shaken with every wind" of temptation, every little blast of opposition and persecution turns them back, and carries them to the ways of sin: whereas resolution fixeth a man's spirit, and makes it most steadfast and unmoveable, and sets him upon a rock, which, "when the winds blow, and the rain falls, and the floods come," abides firm against all impressions.

If I would give the most probable and useful advice to engage and continue a man in a good course, I would commend to him a deliberate and firm resolution. David proved this way with very happy success, Psal. cxix. 106. "I have sworn (says he) and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." This was a security to him against all assaults, and nothing could turn him from his course afterwards; not the dangers he was exposed to, ver. 109. "My soul is continually in my hand, yet do I not forget thy law;" not the snares of wicked men that were laid for him ver. 110. "The wicked have laid a snare for me, yet I erred not from thy precepts." By virtue of this resolution he could rise up in defiance of all those that would have tempted him to any sinful action, ver. 115. "Depart from me ye evil doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God."

When a man is thus resolved upon a holy course, he is not easily diverted from it, and is able to resist the

the importunity and flattery of temptations, and to say to them, as men are wont to do, when they are fully and firmly resolved upon any thing; "Let me alone, I am not to be moved, it is in vain to urge me, I am resolved to the contrary." Thus stiff and resolute men can be in other cases, where there is not near that cause and reason for it: and if we would but take up a generous resolution to break off our sins, and to live better lives, this would be the way to conquer that listlessness and unwillingness, which hinders us from engaging in a good course, and is the cause of so many lame excuses and unreasonable delays. It is the want of resolution, and the weakness of our resolutions, which is the true reason why we are not more equal and constant and uniform in the ways of religion; but are religious only by fits and starts, in a heat, and during some present trouble and conviction of mind. "The double minded is unstable, says St. James, in all his ways." When a man is of several minds, he is easily moved one way or other.

6. And lastly, Consider the infinite danger of remaining unresolved. "The evil day may overtake you," while you are deliberating whether you should avoid it or not. A state of sin is liable to so many hazards, hath so many dangers continually threatening it, and hanging over it, that it is the most imprudent thing in the world to linger in it. It is like Lot's staying in Sodom, when the LORD was going to destroy it, when fire and brimstone were just ready to be rained down from heaven upon it. Whilst men are lingering in a sinful state, if "the LORD be not merciful to them," they will be consumed. Therefore it concerns thee sinner, to determine thy self speedily, and to make haste out of

this dangerous condition, “to escape for thy life, “left some evil overtake thee,” and lest death, finding thee unresolved, determine thy case for thee, and put it out of all doubt, and past all remedy.

How many have been cut off in their irresolution? And because they would not determine what to do, God hath concluded their case for them, and “sworn “in his wrath, that they should not enter into his “rest.” It may be thou promisest thyself the space of many years to resolve in: “Thou fool, this “night thy soul may be required of thee,” and whilst thou art unresolved what to do, God is resolving what to do with thee, and putting a period to his patience and long expectation of thy repentance: and thou knowest not how soon God may do this, and make an immutable determination concerning thee. And woe unto thee when God hath resolved thus.

Suppose thou shouldst be snatched out of the world, and hurried before the dreadful tribunal of God, in this doubtful and unresolved state. And this is possible enough; because thou hast no certain tenure of thy life, thou art at no time secured from the stroke of death: nay it is probable enough; because thou art every moment liable to ten thousand accidents, any one of which may snap in sunder the thread of thy life. And suppose this should happen to thee, what dost thou imagine would become of thee? Wouldst not thou then wish a thousand times, that thou hadst resolved in time? How glad wouldst thou then be, that it were possible for thee to retrieve and call back but one of those days without number, which thou hast so vainly trifled away, that thou mightest resolve upon “the things of thy peace!” but “thou wouldest not” do it “in that thy day,” which

which God afforded thee to this purpose ; thou hast let the opportunity slip out of thy hands, and it will never be in thy power again, but “ the things of thy peace will be” for ever “ hid from thine eyes.”

Why wilt thou then be so foolish, as to run thy self upon the evident hazard of losing heaven, and being miserable for ever ? Why wilt thou make work for a sadder and longer repentance, than that which thou dost now so carefully decline ? This was the case of the foolish virgins in the parable, Matt. xxv. who made account to be ready “ to meet the “ bridegroom” at his coming, but took no care in time to get oil into their lamps. They thought the bridegroom would tarry yet a while longer, and therefore “ they slumbered and slept” in great security : but at midnight, when the cry was made, “ behold the bridegroom cometh ;” then they arose, and in a great hurry and confusion went about “ trimming their lamps ;” they were resolved then, they would have begged or bought oil, and would have been at any pains or cost for it : but then it was too late ; for the door was suddenly shut against them, and no importunity could prevail to have it opened to them.

Canst thou be contented to have the door shut against thee, and when thou shalt cry, “ LORD open “ unto me,” to have him return this answer, “ depart from me, I know thee not ?” If thou canst not, resolve to prevent this in time.

Didst thou but see, and know, and feel, what the miserable do in hell, thou couldst not linger thus, thou couldst not continue so long unresolved. Why the time will come, when thou wilt reflect severely upon thyself, and say, that I should ever be so stupid and sottish, to be unresolved in a matter of such in-

this dangerous condition, “to escape for thy life;” “lest some evil overtake thee,” and lest death, finding thee unresolved, determine thy case for thee, and put it out of all doubt, and past all remedy.

How many have been cut off in their irresolution? And because they would not determine what to do, God hath concluded their case for them, and “sworn” in his wrath, that they should not enter into his “rest.” It may be thou promisest thyself the space of many years to resolve in: “Thou fool, this” “night thy soul may be required of thee,” and whilst thou art unresolved what to do, God is resolving what to do with thee, and putting a period to his patience and long expectation of thy repentance: and thou knowest not how soon God may do this, and make an immutable determination concerning thee. And woe unto thee when God hath resolved thus.

Suppose thou shouldst be snatched out of the world, and hurried before the dreadful tribunal of God, in this doubtful and unresolved state. And this is possible enough; because thou hast no certain tenure of thy life, thou art at no time secured from the stroke of death: nay it is probable enough; because thou art every moment liable to ten thousand accidents, any one of which may snap in sunder the thread of thy life. And suppose this should happen to thee, what dost thou imagine would become of thee? Wouldst not thou then wish a thousand times, that thou hadst resolved in time? How glad wouldst thou then be, that it were possible for thee to retrieve and call back but one of those days without number, which thou hast so vainly trifled away, that thou mightest resolve upon “the things of thy peace!” but “thou wouldest not” do it “in that thy day,” which

which God afforded thee to this purpose ; thou hast let the opportunity slip out of thy hands, and it will never be in thy power again, but “ the things of thy peace will be” for ever “ hid from thine eyes.”

Why wilt thou then be so foolish, as to run thy self upon the evident hazard of losing heaven, and being miserable for ever ? Why wilt thou make work for a sadder and longer repentance, than that which thou dost now so carefully decline ? This was the case of the foolish virgins in the parable, Matt. xxv. who made account to be ready “ to meet the “ bridegroom” at his coming, but took no care in time to get oil into their lamps. They thought the bridegroom would tarry yet a while longer, and therefore “ they slumbered and slept” in great security : but at midnight, when the cry was made, “ behold the bridegroom cometh ;” then they arose, and in a great hurry and confusion went about “ trimming their lamps ;” they were resolved then, they would have begged or bought oil, and would have been at any pains or cost for it : but then it was too late ; for the door was suddenly shut against them, and no importunity could prevail to have it opened to them.

Canst thou be contented to have the door shut against thee, and when thou shalt cry, “ LORD open “ unto me,” to have him return this answer, “ depart from me, I know thee not ?” If thou canst not, resolve to prevent this in time.

Didst thou but see, and know, and feel, what the miserable do in hell, thou couldst not linger thus, thou couldst not continue so long unresolved. Why the time will come, when thou wilt reflect severely upon thyself, and say, that I should ever be so stupid and sottish, to be unresolved in a matter of such in-

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finite concernment to me! How often was I admonished and convinced of the necessity of changing my course? How many inward motions had I to that purpose? How often did my own reason and conscience, and the holy Spirit of God, by his frequent and friendly suggestions, put me upon this? How often was I just upon the brink of resolving? I resolved to resolve; but still I delayed it till death seized upon me unresolved: and now the opportunity is lost, and never to be recovered again. I would not in time resolve to be wise and happy: and now by the sentence of the just and unchangeable God, it is resolved that I must be miserable to all eternity.

How should these considerations quicken us, who have yet these opportunities in our hands: which those who neglected and trifled them away, would now purchase at any rate! I say, how should these considerations which I have proposed, move us to take up a present resolution in the matter! Consider these things, sinner, and lay them seriously to heart, and say to thy self, fool that I have been, to be unresolved so long; not to determine myself in a matter of such mighty consequence; to continue so long in suspense, whether I had best go to heaven or hell, and which was most advisable, to be happy or miserable for ever! Blessed be God that hath been pleased to exercise so much patience and long-suffering towards me, that hath spared me so long, when he might have taken me away, and cut me off unresolved. My soul lies at stake, and for ought I know all eternity depends upon my present and speedy resolution. And now by God's grace I will not delay one moment more, I will hang no longer between heaven and hell. I shall now in the

Second place, offer some considerations to persuade

suade those that have taken up this good resolution to pursue it, and to promote it to practice and execution, and to keep firm and stedfast to it. And to this end, be pleased to consider these three things.

1. What an argument it is of vanity and inconsistency, to change this resolution, whilst the reason of it stands good and is not changed. I suppose that thou wert once resolved to leave thy sins, and to return to God and thy duty. Why dost thou not pursue this resolution? Why dost thou not persist in it? Surely there appeared to thee some reason why thou didst take it up; and if the reason remain, and appear still the same to thee that it did, how comes it to pass that thou hast altered thy mind, and changed thy purpose? Either the case is the same it was, when thou tookest up this resolution; or it is not. If it be altered, then thou hast reason to change thy resolution: if it be not, thou hast the same reason to continue in it, that thou hadst to take it up. Shew then, if thou canst, wherein it is changed. Wert thou mistaken before about the nature of sin, and the pernicious consequences of it; or about the nature of God and goodness? Hast thou any thing now to plead for sin, which thou didst not know or consider before? Art thou now satisfied that sin is not so evil and unreasonable a thing, as thou didst once apprehend, or that it does not threaten thee with so much danger as thou didst fear? Hath God altered his opinion of it, or is he become more favourable to it than he was? Hast thou received any news lately from heaven by any good hands, that God hath reversed his threatnings against sin, or that he hath adjourned the judgment of the world, *sine die*, without any set time? That he hath set the devils at liberty, and releas'd them from their chains of darkness, and
hath

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hath quenched and put out the fire of hell? Or art thou satisfied that there is no such being as God in the world, or that he is not so good as thou didst apprehend him to be, or that he will not reward those that diligently serve him? Hast thou found upon trial, that holiness and virtue are but empty names, and that there is nothing in them? That there is not that pleasure and peace in keeping the commandments of God, which thou wert told of? I am sure thou canst not with reason pretend any thing of all this. Thy reason and conscience and experience cannot speak one word on the behalf of sin, or give any testimony against God and his holy ways. And if the case be the same it was, nothing but thine own vanity and fickleness, or some worse reason, could move thee to alter thy purpose.

2. Let it be farther considered, that if we be not constant to our resolution, all we have done is lost. If thou repentest of thy repentance, it will not prove “a repentance to salvation.” As good to have stayed in Sodom, as to look back after thou art come out of it. Thus God tells us by the prophet. Ezek. xxxiii. 12, 13. “Therefore thou Son of man, say unto the children of thy people, the righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; neither shall the righteous be able to live in the day that he sinneth. When I say to the righteous, he shall surely live: if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered: but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.” So that whatever we have done in the work of repentance, what resolutions soever we have taken up: if afterwards we give over and let them fall, all that we have done is lost, and will come to nothing.

3. Let

3. Let us consider in the last place, that if we be not constant to our resolution, we shall not only lose all that we have done, but we shall thereby render our condition much worse. “Remember Lot’s wife,” who, after she was escaped out of Sodom, looked back, and was made a particular and lasting monument of GOD’s wrath and displeasure; which seems to be meant by that expression of her being “turned into a pillar of salt,” that is, a lasting monument. Prov. xiv. 14. “The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways.” “Shall be filled with his own ways;” this expression doth signify a most heavy and dreadful curse upon those, who fall off from their good purpose and resolution, that they shall have sorrow and trouble enough upon it. For so likewise Prov. i. 26, 27. where GOD threatens wilful and obstinate sinners with the heaviest judgments, that he would “laugh at their calamity, and mock when their fear comes, when their fear comes as desolation, and their destruction as a whirlwind, and fear and anguish cometh upon them;” he adds, as the sum of all other judgments, that “they shall eat the fruit of their own ways, and be filled with their own devices.” Heb. x. 38. “But if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him;” which words are a *μείωσις*, and signify a great deal more than seems to be express’d. “My soul shall have no pleasure in him;” that is, let such an one expect the effects of GOD’s fiercest wrath and displeasure. For so the Hebrews are wont to express things that are great and unspeakable; when they cannot sufficiently set them forth; by saying less, they say more. So Psal. v. 4. where it is said, “thou art not a GOD that hast pleasure in wickedness,” the Psalmist means, and would have us

to

to understand it so, that God is so far from taking any pleasure in the sins of men, that he bears the most violent hatred and displeasure against them. So when the apostle here says, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him," he means, that it is not to be express'd how God will deal with such persons, and how severely his justice will handle them. To the same purpose is that declaration, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them, not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." The condition of all impenitent sinners is very sad; but of apostates much worse: not only because the sins which they commit afterwards are much greater, receiving a new aggravation, which the sins of those who are simply impenitent are not capable of; but likewise because such persons are usually more wicked afterwards. For they that break loose from severe purposes and resolutions of a better course, do by this very thing in a great measure sear and conquer their consciences; and then no wonder if afterwards "they give up themselves to commit all iniquity with greediness." When after long abstinence men return to sin again, their lusts are more fierce and violent; like a man who, after long fasting, returns to his meat with a more raging appetite. This our SAVIOUR sets forth to us in the parable of the unclean spirit's returning again and taking possession of the man, after he had left him. Matt. xii. 43, 44, 45.

"When

“ When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he
“ walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and find-
“ eth none. Then he saith, I will return into my
“ house from whence I came out : And when he is
“ come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnish’d.
“ Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven
“ other spirits more wicked than himself ; and the
“ end of that man is worse than his beginning.”

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The moral of which is, that when a man hath once left his sins, if afterward he entertain thoughts of returning to them again, sin will return upon him with redoubled force and strength, and his heart will be so much the more prepared and disposed for the entertaining of more and greater vices ; and his leaving his sins for a time will be but like a running back, that he may leap with greater violence into hell and destruction.

Besides that such persons do the greatest injury to God and the holy ways of religion, that can be, by forsaking them after they have owned and approved them. For it will not be so much regarded, what wicked men, who have always been so, talk against God and religion ; because they do not talk from experience, but “ speak evil of the things which they “ know not : ” whereas those who forsake the ways of religion after they have once engaged in them, do disparage religion more effectually, and reproach it with greater advantage ; because they pretend to speak from the experience they have had of it ; they have tried both the ways of sin, and the ways of religion, and after experience of both, they return to sin again : which, what is it but to proclaim to the world, that the ways of sin and vice are rather to be chosen than the ways of holiness and virtue ; that the devil is a better master than God, and that a

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sinful and wicked life yields more pleasure and greater advantages, than are to be had in keeping the commandments of God? And this must needs be a high provocation, and a heavy aggravation of our ruin. Let these considerations prevail with us, to pursue this holy resolution, after we have taken it up, and to persist in it. There remains only the

VI. And last particular which I proposed to be spoken to, viz. to add some directions for the maintaining and making good of this resolution of repentance and amendment; and they shall be these three.

1. Let us do all in the strength of God, considering our necessary and essential dependance upon him, and that "without him," and the assistance of his grace, "we can do nothing." "We are not (as the apostle tells us) sufficient of ourselves, as of ourselves," that is, without the assistance of God's holy Spirit, "to think any thing" that is good; much less to resolve upon it. "It is God that worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure," that is, of his own goodness, as the same apostle speaks, Phil. ii. 13. It is God that upholds us in being, and from whom we have all our power as to natural actions; but as to spiritual things, considering the great corruption and depravation of human nature, we stand in need of a more especial and immediate assistance.

If we know any thing of ourselves, we cannot but know what foolish and ignorant creatures we are, how weak and impotent, how averse and opposite to any thing that is good. And therefore it is wise counsel in all cases, but chiefly in spiritual matters, which Solomon gives, Prov. iii. 5, 6. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not to
" thine

“ thine own understanding. Acknowledge him in
“ all thy ways: and he shall direct thy steps.” Let
us then address ourselves to GOD, in the words of
the holy prophet, Jer. x. 23. “ O LORD, I know
“ that the way of man is not in himself, and that it
“ is not in man that walketh, to direct his steps.”
And let us beg of him, that he would consider our
case, commiserate our weakness, and pity our im-
potency, and that he would join his strength to us,
and grant us the assistance of his grace and holy spi-
rit, to put us upon sincere resolutions of a new life,
and to keep us constant and stedfast to them; “ to
“ open the eyes of our minds, and to turn us from
“ darkness to light, and from the power of Satan
“ and our lusts, unto GOD; that we may repent and
“ turn to GOD, and do works meet for repentance,
“ that so we may receive forgiveness of sins, and an
“ inheritance among them that are sanctified through
“ faith that is in CHRIST.”

And for our encouragement in this matter, GOD
hath bid us to apply ourselves to him; and he hath
promised not to be wanting to us, in words as express
and universal as can well be devised. Jam. i. 6.
“ If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of GOD,
“ who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth no
“ man: but let him ask in faith, nothing waver-
“ ing,” that is, not doubting but that GOD is both
able and willing to give what he asks. And Luke
xi. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. “ I say unto you, ask,
“ and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall
“ find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.
“ For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that
“ seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it
“ shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any
“ of you that is a father, will he give him a stone?
“ Or

“ Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him?” To encourage our faith, our SAVIOUR useth such an argument as may give us the greatest assurance. We are commonly confident, that our earthly parents will not deny us those things that are good and necessary for us, though they may be otherwise evil: “ how much more then shall our heavenly Father,” who is essentially and infinitely good, “ give his holy Spirit to us?” And if this be not enough, St. Matthew useth a larger expression, “ How much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him?” If there be any thing that is good, and we stand in need of it, and earnestly pray to GOD for it, we may be confident that he will give it us.

2. We ought to be very watchful over ourselves, considering our weakness and wavering, and instability and fickleness, the treachery and deceitfulness of our own hearts, and the malice of Satan. It will be a great while before the habits of sin be so weakened and subdued, as that we shall have no propension to return to them again; so that our hearts will be often endeavouring to return to their former posture, and like a deceitful bow, which is not firmly strong, to start back. And besides the deceitfulness of sin and our own hearts, the devil is very malicious, and his malice will make him vigilant to watch all advantages against us; and his great design will be to shake our resolution; for if that stand, he knows his kingdom will fall, and therefore he raiseth all his batteries

batteries against this fort, and labours by all means to undermine it; and nothing will be matter of greater triumph to him, than to gain a person that was revolted from him, and resolved to leave his service. If therefore thou expectest God's grace and assistance to keep thee steadfast to thy resolution, do not neglect thyself, but "keep thy heart with all diligence," and watch carefully over thyself: for because "God worketh in us both to will and to do," therefore he expects that "we should work out our salvation with fear and trembling," lest by our own carelessness and neglect we should miscarry.

3. Let us frequently renew and reinforce our resolutions, more especially when we think of coming to the sacrament, and approaching the holy table of the LORD. Nothing is more apt to beget in us good resolutions, and to strengthen them, than to consider the dreadful sufferings of the Son of God for our sins, which are so lively set forth and represented to us in his holy sacrament, which as it is on God's part a seal and confirmation of his grace and love to us, so on our part it ought to be a solemn ratification of our covenant with God, "to depart from iniquity, and to walk before him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives."

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The nature and necessity of restitution.

LUKE xix. 8, 9.

And if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And JESUS said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house.

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The first
sermon on
this text.

ON E particular and eminent fruit of true repentance, is the making of restitution and satisfaction to those whom we have injured. As for GOD, we can make no satisfaction and compensation to him, for the injuries we have done him by our sins; all that we can do in respect of GOD, is to confess our sins to him, to make acknowledgment of our miscarriages, to be heartily troubled for what we have done, and not to do the like for the future. But for injuries done to men, we may in many cases make reparation and satisfaction. And this, as it is one of the best signs and evidences of a true repentance; so it is one of the most proper and genuine effects of it: for this is as much as in us lies, to undo what we have done, and to unfin our sins.

But, because the practice of this duty doth so interfere with the interest of men, and consequently it will be very difficult to convince men of their duty in this particular, and to persuade them to it; therefore I design to handle this particular fruit and effect of a true repentance by itself, from these words, which contain in them,

I. The fruit and effect of Zaccheus his conversion and

and repentance; "If I have taken any thing from any man, I restore him fourfold."

II. The declaration, which our SAVIOUR makes hereupon, of the truth of his repentance and conversion, and the happy state he was thereby put into. "And JESUS said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, for as much as he also is the son of Abraham;" as if he had said, by these fruits and effects it appears, that this is a repentance to salvation; and this man whom you look upon as a sinner and a heathen, may by better right call Abraham father, than any of you formal pharisees and Jews, who glory so much in being the children of Abraham.

I. The fruit and effect of Zaccheus's conversion and repentance; "If, &c.

This Zaccheus, as you find at the second verse, was chief of the publicans, which was an office of great odium and infamy among the Jews, they being the collectors of the tribute which the Roman emperor, under whose power the Jews then were, did exact from them. And because these publicans farmed this tribute of the emperor at a certain rent, they made a gain out of it to themselves, by exacting and requiring more of the people than was due upon that account; so that their calling was very infamous, upon three accounts.

1. Because they were the instruments of oppressing their countrymen; for so they looked upon the tax they paid to the Romans, as a great oppression.

2. Because they were forced by the necessity of their calling to have familiar conversation with heathens, whom they looked upon as sinners. Hence the phrase used by the apostle, of "sinners of the Gentiles." And hence likewise probably it is, that
3 "publicans

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“ publicans and sinners, publicans and heathens,” are joined several times together, because of the occasions of frequent converse which the publicans had with heathens.

3. But principally they were odious, because of the common injustice and oppression, which they used in the management of their calling, by fraud and violence extorting more than was due, to enhance the profit of their places. Hence it is, that this sort of officers have been generally branded, and reckoned among the worst sort of men. So he in the comedy, πάντες τηλῶναι, πάντες εἰσὶν ἄρπαγες, “ all publicans are rapacious or robbers.” And this is most probably the sin which Zaccheus here repents of, and in regard to which he promises restitution, καὶ εἰ τινὸς ἐσυκοφάνησα, “ and if I have taken any “ thing from any man by false accusation ;” so we render the words in our translation : but the word ἐσυκοφάνησα signifies more generally, “ if I have “ been injurious to any one, if I have wronged any “ man,” as appears by the constant use of this word by the LXX, who by this word do translate the most general Hebrew words, which signify any kind of injury or oppression, either by fraud or violence or calumny. So that there is no reason here to restrain it, “ wronging men by false accusation :” for Zaccheus his sin being in all probability extorting more than was due, this might as easily be done many other ways, as by false accusation. And that this was the common sin of the publicans, appears by the counsel which John the Baptist gives them, Luke iii. 12, 15. “ Then came also the publicans to be baptized, “ and said unto him, master, what shall we do ? “ And he said unto them, exact no more than that “ which is appointed you ;” that is, do not by fraud

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or violence extort from any man, any more than the tribute which is laid upon him.

So that Zaccheus here promiseth, that if he had been injurious to any man in his office, by extorting more than was due, he would restore to him fourfold. And if Zaccheus calculated his estate right, and intended to reserve any part of it to himself, which is but reasonable to suppose; it could be no very great part of his estate which was injuriously got; and I am afraid a far smaller proportion than many are guilty of, who yet pass for very honest men in comparison of the publicans. The text saith, he was a rich man. Suppose he was worth ten or twelve thousand pounds; half he gives to the poor; that was well got, or else his whole estate could not have made fourfold restitution for it. Suppose he reserved a thousand or two to himself, then at the rate of restoring fourfold, not above a thousand can be injuriously got, that is about a penny in the shilling. I am afraid that now a-days there are few such moderate oppressors: nay, it is possible that the proportion of his estate injuriously got might be much less; more it could not easily be. But whatever it was, he does not plead that by way of excuse for himself, he freely confesseth he had sinned in this kind, and offers restitution to the utmost, much more than the law did require in such cases.

II. You have the declaration our SAVIOUR makes hereupon, of the truth of his repentance and conversion, and the happy state he was thereby put into, "this day is salvation come to this house."

The observation I shall make from hence is this, that restitution and satisfaction for the injuries we have done to others, is a proper and genuine effect of true repentance. I know the text only speaks of

restitution in case of oppression and exaction: but because there is the same reason why restitution should be made for all other injuries, I think I may, without any force or violence to my text, very well make it the foundation of a more general discourse concerning restitution.

In the handling of this, I shall,

First, open to you the nature of this duty.

Secondly, confirm the truth of the proposition, by shewing the necessity of it.

Thirdly, endeavour to persuade men to the discharge of this necessary duty.

First, for the opening the nature of this duty, I will consider,

I. The act.

II. The latitude or extent of the object, as I may call it, or the matter about which it is conversant.

III. The manner how it is to be done.

IV. The measure of it.

V. The persons who are bound to make restitution; and to whom it is to be made.

VI. The time in which it is to be done.

VII. The order of doing it, where more are injured, and restitution cannot be made at once to all.

I. For the act. Restitution is nothing else but the making reparation or satisfaction to another for the injuries we have done him. It is to restore a man to the good condition, from which, contrary to right and to our duty, we have removed him. Restitution is only done in case of injury. Another man may be damaged and prejudiced by us many ways, and we not be bound to make restitution; because there are many cases, wherein a man deserves the prejudice we do to him. As when we are instruments of inflicting upon a man the punishment which the law doth
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sentence him to. And there are many cases wherein we may be prejudicial to others, and cannot help it. As a man that is sick of a contagious disease, may infect others that are about him : but he is not injurious to them ; because it is not his fault, but his infelicity.

II. For the latitude and extent of the object, as I may call it, or the matter about which it is conversant. It extends to all kind of injuries, which may be reduced to these two heads ; either we injure a person with or without his consent.

1. Some injuries are done to persons with their consent. Such are most of those injuries which are done to the souls of men, when we command, or counsel, or encourage them to sin, or draw them in by our example. For the maxim *volenti non fit injuria*, "there's no injury done to a man that is "willing," is not so to be understood, as that a man may not in some sort consent to his own wrong : for absolute freedom and willingness supposeth that a man is wholly left to himself, and that he understands fully what he does. And in this sense no man sins willingly, that is, perfectly knowing and actually considering what he does ; and commands, and persuasion, and example are a kind of violence : yet none of these hinder, but that a man in these cases may sufficiently consent to what he does. But yet he is not so perfectly free, as to excuse him that draws him into sin by these ways. So likewise when a man refuseth to do that which is his duty without a reward ; for instance, to do justice to another ; he is injurious in so doing : but yet not altogether without the consent of him whom he injures.

2. Injuries are done to persons without their consent. And these, though they are not always the greatest mischiefs, yet they are the greatest injuries. And

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these injuries are done either by fraud and cunning, or by violence and oppression ; either by over-reaching another man in wit, or over-bearing him by power. And these usually either respect the bodies of men, or their estates, or their good name. The bodies of men. He that maims another, or does him any other injury in his limbs or health, either by fraud or force, is bound, so far as he is able, to make reparation for the injury. Or they respect the estates of men. If by cunning, or by violence, or by false testimony or accusation, thou hast hindered a man of any benefit, which otherwise would have come to him, thou art bound to restitution. If by thy power or interest, by thy knowledge in the law, or skill in business, thou hast directly and avowedly helped and assisted another to do injustice to his neighbour, thou art bound to restitution ; though not as the principal, yet as the accessory. If thou hast over-reached thy brother in any contract, making advantage of his ignorance or unskilfulness ; if thou hast made a gain of his necessity ; if thou hast by thy power and interest, or by any more violent and forcible way detained his right, or taken away that which was his ; thou art bound to make reparation for these injuries, to restore that which thou hast borrowed, to return the pledge which thou hast wrongfully kept, to release unconscionable forfeitures, to pay debts, to make satisfaction for frauds and cheats, to take off all unjust invasions and surprizals of estates : yea though the fraud be such that thou art not liable to make satisfaction by any human law, yet thou art as much bound to it in conscience to God and thy duty, as if thou hadst stoln, or taken it by violence from thy neighbour. For in truth and reality, fraud is as great an injury as violence, although human

laws cannot take cognizance of it, so as to relieve every man that is over-reached in a bargain : nay of the two it is worse ; for whenever thou deceivest a man in this kind, thou dost not only wrong him in point of estate, but thou abusest his understanding.

And so likewise in respect of a man's fame and reputation. If thou hast hurt any man's good name by slander or calumny, by false witness, by rendring him ridiculous, or any other way, thou art bound to give such satisfaction as the thing is capable of, or if there be any other injury which I have not mentioned, thou art obliged to make reparation for it.

III. As to the manner how restitution is to be made.

1. Thou art bound to do it voluntarily, and of thy own accord, though the person injured do not know who it was that did him the injury, though he do not seek reparation by law. When a man is forced by law to make restitution, it is not a virtue, but necessity ; this is not a fruit of repentance and a good mind, but of good law. And that thou dost not do it, unless the law compel thee to it, is an argument thou wouldst not have done it, if thou couldst have avoided it. And though the thing be done, yet thou hast not done it, but the law ; and unless thou heartily repent of thy crime, the injury still lies at thy door, and in God's account thou art as guilty as if no restitution had been made. Not that thou art bound in this case to make new restitution over again ; but thou art bound to bewail thy neglect, that thou didst not do it voluntarily and without the compulsion of the law.

2. Thou must do it in kind, if the thing be capable of it, and the injured party demand it. Thou must restore the very thing which thou hadst deprived

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ed thy neighbour of, if it be such a thing as can be restored, and be still in thy power ; unless he voluntarily accept of some other thing in exchange.

3. If thou canst not restore it in kind, thou art bound to restore it in value, in something that is as good. As for spiritual injuries done to the souls of men, we are bound to make such reparation and compensation as we can. Those whom we have drawn into sin, and engaged in wicked courses, by our influence and example, or by neglect of our duty towards them, we are so far as becomes the relation we stand into them, to make acknowledgment of our fault, to endeavour by our instruction and counsel to reclaim them from those sins we led them into, and “ to recover them out of the snare of the “ devil ;” and should never be at rest till we have done as much or more for the furtherance of their salvation, and helping them forwards towards heaven, as we did contribute before to their ruin and destruction. If we have violated any one’s chastity, we are bound to marry them, if it was done upon that condition, and if they require it : thou art bound to ~~keep~~ and maintain those children which are the fruit of thy lust, and to make reparation to the person whom thou hast injured, by dowry or otherwise.

If thou hast defrauded and injured any man in his good name, thou art obliged to make him a compensation by acknowledgment of thy fault, by a studious vindication of him, and by doing him honour and repairing his credit in all fitting ways. And if the injury be irreparable (as it frequently happens, that we can hardly so effectually vindicate a man, as we can defame him ; and it is seldom seen that those wounds which are given to mens reputation are perfectly healed) I say, if the injury be irreparable, especially

cially if it prove really prejudicial to a man in his calling and civil interest; if no other satisfaction will be accepted, it is to be made in money, "which," "Solomon says, answers all things;" and the rather, because the reason and equity of human laws hath thought fit to assign this way of satisfaction in many cases upon actions of scandal and defamation. And whatever the law would give in any case, if it could be proved, that is the least we are bound in conscience to do, when we are guilty to ourselves, though the law cannot take hold of us.

So likewise, if thou hast wounded a man, thou art bound to pay the cure, to repair to him and his relations the disability for his calling, and his way of livelihood and subsistence, which he hath contracted by thy injury. And so for false imprisonment, the real detriment which comes to him by it is to be made amends for: and so in all other cases, the injured person is so far as is possible to be restored to the good condition in which he was before the injury.

IV. As to the measure and proportion of the restitution we are to make. Zaccheus here offers fourfold, which was much beyond what any law required in like cases. The measure of restitution by the judicial law of the Jews, did very much vary according to the kind and degree of the injury. In some cases a man was only bound to simple restitution; but then he was to do it to the full, *Exod. xxii. 5, 6.* And so if that which is another man's be "delivered unto his neighbour to keep, and be stolon from him, he is to make restitution thereof," *ver. 12.* "And so if a man borrow ought of his neighbour, and if it be hurt or die, the owner thereof not being with it, he shall surely make it good," *ver. 14.* "But for all manner of trespasses by way of theft, whether

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“ whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, he whom the judge shall condemn, shall pay double to his neighbour,” ver. 9. that is, if it be of “ a living creature,” if the theft be “ found in his hands alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep, he shall restore double,” ver. 4. But if a man did “ steal an ox or a sheep, and did kill it or sell it,” he was to restore “ five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.” And thus we find David judged upon Nathan’s parable of the rich man, who had taken the poor man’s only lamb, and kill’d and drest it for a traveller that came to him, 2 Sam. xii. 6. “ He shall restore the lamb fourfold.” Now the reason of this seems to be partly because of the advantage and usefulness of those creatures above any other; and partly because when they were once killed or alienated, a man could not without great trouble and difficulty make discovery, which hazard of not discovering seems to be accounted for in the restitution: but if a man did voluntarily offer restitution, before he was prosecuted, for any thing that was taken by violence, or unjustly detained from his neighbour, then he was only “ to restore the principal, and to add a fifth part thereto, and to offer up an offering to the LORD, and so his atonement was made,” Lev. vi. 1, &c.

So that the highest proportion was a fourth or fifth part, and that only in the particular case of sheep or oxen stoln away, and killed or alienated afterwards. Indeed Solomon speaks of a sevenfold restitution, Prov. vi. 31. where he saith, “ If a thief be found, he shall restore sevenfold, even all the substance of his house;” where seven is only a number of perfection, and the meaning is, he shall make

make perfect and full restitution according to the law, so far as his substance or estate will reach.

So that it seems Zaccheus in restoring fourfold did out-do the utmost severity of the law ; which in case of fraud and oppression was but double, if demanded ; if voluntarily offered, was the principal and a fifth part added : but to testify the truth of his repentance, and his hearty sorrow for the injuries he had done, he punisheth himself beyond what the law would have done.

I do not say that this example binds as to this measure and proportion: nay, I do not say we are bound to the proportions of the law ; for that only concerned the nation of the Jews : but although we be free from the letter of the law, yet we are tied to the equity of it. As to the substance of the duty of restitution, we are bound to that by the law of nature. As to the measure and proportion, the equity of the judicial law in it's proportions, and of Zaccheus his example, ought to be considerable to us.

But to speak more particularly concerning the measures and proportions of restitution, I shall lay down these propositions.

1. Where restitution can be made in kind, or the injury can be certainly valued, we are to restore the thing, or the value.

2. We are bound to restore the thing, with the natural increase of it, that is, to satisfy for the loss sustained in the mean time, and the gain hindered.

3. Where the thing cannot be restored, and the value of it is not certain, we are to give reasonable satisfaction, that is, according to a middle estimation ; not the highest, nor the lowest of things of the kind. The injured person can demand no more, and strict justice requires no more. But it is safe for

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him that hath done the injury, rather to exceed than to fall short.

4. We are at least to give by way of restitution what the law would give; for that is generally equal, and in most cases rather favourable than rigorous.

5. A man is not only bound to restitution for the injury which he did, but for all that directly follows upon his injurious act, though it were beyond his intention. For the first injury being wilful, thou art presumed to will all that which directly followed upon it; according to that rule, *Involuntarium ortum ex voluntario censetur pro voluntario*. "We are presumed to will that which follows upon a voluntary action, though we did not intend it." For instance, if a man maliciously and knowingly set fire upon another man's house, though he intended only an injury to that particular person, yet if a wind come and drive the fire to his neighbours at some distance, though he did not intend this, yet because the first act was unlawful, he is liable to satisfy for all the direct consequences of it. If a man wound another without any intention of killing him, and the wound prove mortal, though there was no probability that death would ensue upon it, the man is bound, because the first act was injurious, to make reparation to his relations for the damage they sustain by his death; and if they did depend solely upon him, who died by such injury, thou art bound to maintain them.

6. Because those who have lived in a trade and course of injustice, can hardly remember all the particular injuries they have done, so as to make exact satisfaction for them, it will not be amiss over and besides to give something to the poor. So Zaccheus does here, "half of my estate I give to the poor," "and if I have taken any thing," &c. V. The

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V. The persons who are concerned in restitution. S E R M.
And here I shall consider, CLXX.

First, The persons who are bound to make restitution.

Secondly, The persons to whom it is to be made.

First, The persons who are bound to make restitution. In general, they who have done the injury, or they who come into their stead, so as in law or equity the injury devolves and descends upon them. But for the clearer stating of this, I shall lay down several propositions, which may serve to resolve a great many cases, that may be put concerning persons obliged to make restitution.

1. If the injury be done solely by one, without accomplices and partakers in the crime, he alone is responsible, and wholly bound to make satisfaction; I mean, he only is bound so long as he lives; but if the injury descends as a burden upon the estate, then he who enjoys the estate becomes bound to make satisfaction; as I shall shew afterwards.

2. If the injury was done by more, who did all equally concur to the doing of it, they are all equally bound to make satisfaction; and they are bound to concur together to that purpose; and in case of such concurrence, every one is not bound to satisfy for the whole, but *pro ratâ parte*, for his share; provided they do among them make full satisfaction.

3. If all will not concur, those that are willing are bound among them to make reparation for the injury: nay, if all the rest refuse to join with thee in it, thou art bound *in solidum* to make full reparation so far as thou art able; because every one was guilty of the whole injury. For instance, if four men conspire together to cheat a man, or to rob him, any one of these, if the rest refuse, is bound to make en-

tire satisfaction; yea, though he was only partaker in the benefit; because, as I said before, he is guilty of the whole injury.

4. If the injury be done by more, who do unequally concur to the doing of it, he that is principal is chiefly and principally bound to make satisfaction: and here I do not take principal, strictly in the sense of the law, but in the sense of equity; not for him always who is the more immediate cause of the injury, but for him who was the greatest cause, and by whose influence chiefly it was procured and done: but if the principal will not, the accessories and instruments are bound, at least for their share, and according to the proportion of the hand they had in it. But if the principal do satisfy in the name, and upon the account of the rest, then the accessories are free from an obligation to restitution, and are only bound to repentance.

5. If the injury devolve upon another, by descending as a burden upon the estate, he who enjoys the estate is bound to make satisfaction. And when injuries do thus descend as burdens and incumbrances upon estates, and when not, the civil laws of the place where we live must determine: but then where my case falls within the compass of the law, I am bound voluntarily to satisfy without the compulsion of the law. For instance, if an estate fall to me charged with a debt, which hath been unjustly detained, I am bound voluntarily to discharge the debt, so soon as it appears to me, before I am compell'd thereto by the law.

6. As for personal injuries which do not lye as burdens upon the estate, nor do by the law descend upon the son or heir, though in strict justice a man be not bound to make compensation for them, for
that

that would be endless, & *infinitum in lege repudiat*, “no law can take notice of that which is infinite and endless;” for *quæ exitum non habent habentur pro impossibilibus*, “those things which have no end, to which no bounds can be set, are esteemed among things impossible,” to which no man can be obliged: but though in strict justice the heir be not bound to make reparation, for the personal injuries of him whom he succeeds in the estate, yet in many cases it is equitable, and generous, and christian, for such persons to make some kind of reparation for palpable and notorious injuries. For instance, if I be heir to an estate, part of which I know certainly was injuriously gotten, it is not only christian, but prudent, to make satisfaction in the case to the party injured, if certainly known; if not, to give it to the poor; for by this means I may take out the moth, which was bred by injustice in the estate, and rub off the rust, that sticks to the gold and silver, which was got by oppression or fraud, and so free the remaining part of the estate from that secret and divine *Nemesis* which attends it and follows it. And for the same reason, it is very noble and christian, for the son and heir of an unjust father, to make some reparation for his father’s injuries by restitution, if the thing be capable of it: if not, by doing all good offices to the injured persons, which is some kind of compensation. And in this case the obligation is greater, because by this means a man does not only do what in him lies, to cut off the curse, which by his father’s oppression and injustice is intail’d upon the family and estate: but likewise, because a son ought much more to be concern’d for his father, than any other person, and to consult the honour and reputation both of him and his own family; and the reparation

reparation which the son makes, is in some sort the father's act, because he succeeds him and comes into his stead.

Secondly, As to the persons to whom satisfaction is to be made. For the resolution of those cases which may fall under this head, I shall lay down these propositions.

1. If the injured person can be certainly known, and be alive and extant, the satisfaction is to be made to him.

2. If he be not alive, or which is all one, not to be found or come at, satisfaction is to be made to his nearest relations, his wife, or children, or brothers, or other nearest kindred. The reason is, because satisfaction being due, and I having no right to keep that which I have injuriously gotten, if I cannot restore it to the party himself, I ought in all reason to place it there where I may most reasonably presume the party injured would have bestowed his estate, and this part of it amongst the rest, had he been possessed of it. And by the same reason that I am bound thus to restore the part of his estate which I have injuriously taken or detained from him, I am likewise obliged to give satisfaction to the same person for any other injury: for to whomsoever I would pay a debt due to one that is deceased, to the same person I ought to give satisfaction for the injuries, by which a debt is, though not formally, yet virtually contracted.

3. If the party injured be not certainly known, or have no near relations known to me, in that case I think it very advisable to give so much to the poor, or to some charitable use; or if the party injured be not capable of proper satisfaction, as sometimes it is a community and body of men that you have injured, in this case it is proper to repair the injuries to communities

munities or bodies of men, by equivalent good offices, or by some publick good work, which may be of common benefit and advantage. This is the fifth thing I propos'd to speak to, the persons concern'd in restitution; both the persons who are bound to make restitution, and the persons to whom it is to be made. Of the rest hereafter.

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The nature and necessity of restitution.

LUKE xix. 8, 9.

And if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And JESUS said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house.

I N speaking to these words, I propos'd to consider, S E R M.
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First, The nature of this duty of restitution.

Secondly, To shew the necessity of it.

Thirdly, To perswade men to the discharge of it.

In treating of the nature of restitution, I have The
second
sermon on
this text.

consider'd,

I. The act.

II. The extent of it.

III. The manner how it is to be perform'd.

IV. The measure of it.

V. The persons who are to make restitution; and the persons to whom restitution is to be made. I now proceed to consider.

VI. The time when restitution is to be made. In these cases a man is not tied up to an instant, not just

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just to the present time, unless the case be such, that he can never do it, if he do not do it then. As if a man lie upon his death-bed ; that is a case that admits of no delay, a man should hasten restitution, as he would do the making of his will, and the disposal of his estate ; lest if he do not do it presently, he lose his opportunity of doing it for ever : but ordinarily, a man is not so strictly tied up to moments, and to the present time. It is sufficient that a man be for the present resolved to do it, so soon as morally he can, so soon as he would do other actions of great moment and concernment. And to this purpose the text gives us an excellent pattern ; Zaccheus, the same day he repented, took up this resolution, and to oblige himself effectually to put it in execution, he publicly declares it, and before all the people offers to make restitution to all whom he had injured.

Therefore take heed of all unnecessary delays in these matters : for though God would accept of a firm and sincere resolution in this case, if a person thus resolved should, before he could bring his resolution to effect, happen to be cut off by death, or be otherwise rendered incapable of doing it ; I say, though God would accept such a resolution as this, yet he will not interpret that to be a sincere resolution, which a man is negligent to put in practice : for every neglect of putting our resolution in practice, is a degree of quitting and altering it ; and he who did not do what he was resolved to do, when he had an opportunity and ability of doing it, is justly presumed to have let fall his resolution.

Therefore let no man presume upon his good intention and resolution in this kind ; for they are only acceptable to God, so far as they are sincere and real ;
and

and they are only so far sincere and real, as the man that makes them, is ready to put them in execution, so soon as morally he can. And if thou carelessly and supinely trifle away thy opportunities in this kind, God may likewise deprive thee of an opportunity for ever. For all the while thou wilfully neglectest to make restitution, thou art guilty of the injury ; and there are hardly two sins that cry louder to God for a quick and speedy revenge, than injustice and oppression, deceit and fraud. God many times takes such causes into his more immediate cognizance, 1 Theff. iv. 6. " Let no man deceive or " go beyond his brother in any thing : for God is " the avenger of such." And David tells us, that God in a peculiar manner " abhors the blood-thirsty " and deceitful man ;" and threatens that " he " shall not live out half his days." And God by the prophet, Mal. iii. 5. tells us, that " He will " be a swift witness against the oppressors." And if God be so swift to take vengeance upon such persons, surely then they are concerned to be very quick and speedy in making satisfaction for their injuries and oppressions, lest divine vengeance prevent them, and instead of making reparation to men, they be called upon to make satisfaction to the justice of God ; and you know who hath said it, that " it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

You therefore that have hitherto neglected this duty, delay it no longer ; by all means discharge your consciences of this burden, before you come to lye upon a death-bed. Then the consciences of the worst of men begin to work, like a stomach oppressed and surcharged with meat ; and then they are willing for their ease to vomit up those estates, which they have devoured by fraud and injustice ; then

they begin to consider the difficulty of being saved, and to fear that it will be impossible for them ever “to enter in at the strait gate,” thus laden with the spoils of violence and deceit; even those that have the hardest and most feared consciences, will be touched with the sense of such great sins at such a time: but do not thou defer this work to that time, for these two reasons.

1. Because it cannot be so acceptable to God, to make restitution at such a time, as when thou art in health and in hopes of longer life. To give a man his own, when thou canst enjoy it and use it no longer, this is next to detaining of it.

2. Because in all probability the restitution which is then made will not prove so effectual. What thou dost thyself, that thou art sure is done: but what thou leavest to be done by thy executors, and chargest upon them, thou art not sure will be done; ten to one but if they can find out any trick and evasion in law, either to delay or avoid the doing of it, it shall either never be done, or very slowly. This is the sixth thing, the time when restitution is to be made.

But before I leave this head, there is one case very proper to be considered, which relates to this circumstance of time, and that is concerning injuries of a very ancient date; that is, how far this duty of restitution is to look backward, and whether it doth not expire by tract of time? For answer to this, I shall lay down these propositions.

1. At what distance of time soever the law would in the case make reparation and give satisfaction, we are undoubtedly bound in conscience voluntarily to give it. I deliver this generally; because, though it be possible some civil laws may be in some cases unreasonable in this matter, yet they are our best rule

and guide ; and speaking generally and for the most part, they are as equitable as the reason of man could devise. Not that we are to tie ourselves strictly to the law, so as not to go farther, if reason and equity require ; for, as Seneca says, *Parum est ad legem bonum esse*, “ it is no great argument of goodness, “ to be just as good as the law requires.” Therefore I think it will very well become a good man, in many cases, rather to be better than the law, than to keep strictly to it.

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2. In cases where the law hath not determined the time, we may do well to observe a proportion to what the law hath determined in other cases, which come nearest our own case.

3. When the injury is so old, that the right which the injured person had to reparation is reasonably presumed to be quitted and forsaken, then the obligation to satisfaction ceaseth and expires. The reason is plain, because every man may recede from his own right, and give it up to another ; and where a man may reasonably be presumed to have parted with his right to another, the obligation to restitution ceaseth, and the right of claiming it. Now when a thing begins, *haberi pro derelicto*, that is, when a right may reasonably be presumed to be quitted and forsaken, cannot in general be determined : but this must be estimated according to the importance of the right and thing in controversy, as whether it be more or less considerable ; and according to the reason and determination of laws about things of this nature. To illustrate this rule by instances. The Saxons, Danes, and Normans, did at several times invade and conquer this nation, and conquered it we will suppose unjustly, and consequently did hold and possess that which truly belonged to others, contrary

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to right ; and several of the posterity of each of these do probably to this day hold what was then injuriously gotten ; I say, in this case, the obligation to satisfaction and restitution is long since expired, and the original title, which those who were dispossessed had, is reasonably presumed to belong since quitted and forsaken ; and that for very wise reasons in law and government ; because it would confound and unsettle all estates, if every thing, the original title whereof is naught, were to be restored ; and it is but equal to presume, that all mankind are so reasonable, as to quit their right in such cases, rather than to cause endless disturbances, and to have the guilt of injustice everlastingly perpetuated. And though it be a rule in civil law, that *vitiosum initio, tractu temporis non convalescit*, “ a title originally “ bad can never by time be made just ; ” it is only true thus far, that time in itself doth not alter the nature of things : but considering the necessities of the world, and the infinite difficulties of retrieving an ancient right, and the inconveniencies and disturbances that would thereby redound to human society, it is better that an injury should be perpetuated, than that a great inconveniency should come by endeavouring to redress it ; so that although considering a thing simply in itself, an injury is so far from being lessened or nulled by tract of time, that it is increased, and the longer it continues, the greater it is ; yet by accident, and in compliance with the necessity of things, length of time may give a right to that which was at first injuriously possess’d. Judg. xi. 26. Thus Jephthah reasons with the king of Ammon, who had made war for recovery of an ancient right, as he supposed. And though the instances I have given of the unjust conquest of a nation be great and publick ;

publick ; yet the same is to be determined proportionably in less and particular cases. And thus I have done with the sixth thing.

VII. And lastly, as to the order of restitution. When we have injured a great many, and are not able to make restitution to all at once, our best prudence and discretion must govern us herein. Because no certain rule can be given, which will reach all cases, I will only say this in general, that it is reasonable first to make reparation for the oldest and greatest injuries ; and *cæteris paribus*, if all other considerations be equal, to consider those first who are most necessitous, and if there be any other special reason and obligation arising from the nature of the injury, or the circumstances of the person injured, to have regard to them. I come now in the

Second place, to confirm the truth of the proposition, that to make restitution and satisfaction to those whom we have injured, is a proper and necessary fruit of a true repentance. And this will appear, if we consider these two things,

I. Our obligation to this duty.

II. The nature of repentance.

I. Our obligation to this duty. Upon the same account that we are obliged to repentance, we are obliged to restitution ; and both these obligations arise from natural equity and justice. All sin is an injury done ; and though repentance be not strictly satisfaction, yet it is the best we can make ; and he is unjust, who having done an injury, does not make the best reparation he can. But now there are some sins, in which, besides the injury that is done to God by them, upon the general account, as they are sins and violations of his laws, there is likewise a particular injury done to men ; and such are all those,
the

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the effect whereof redounds to the prejudice of other men : such are fraud and oppression, and all other sins whereby others are injured. So that in these kinds of sins, there are two things considerable, the irregularity and vitiousness of the act, and the evil effects of it upon other men : the former respects the law, and calls for sorrow and repentance for our violation of it ; the latter respects the person that is injured, and calls for satisfaction and restitution. So that our obligation to restitution is founded in the immutable and indispensable law of nature, which is “ to do that to another, which we would have another do to us.” We would have no man be injurious to us, or if he hath been so, we would have him make satisfaction and reparation to us of the injury he hath done ; and we take it grievously from him, if he do not. Now nothing is more just and equitable, than that we should do that to others, which we in like case would expect from them : for the very same obligation that lyes upon others towards us, does lye upon us in regard to others.

II. This will yet further appear, if we consider the nature of repentance, which is to be sorry for what we have done, and not to do the like for the future. Now if thou be sorry for what thou hast done, thou wishest with all thy heart thou hadst not done it ; and if thou dost so, thou wilt undo, as much as in thee lyeth, what thou hast done. Now the best way to undo an injury, is to make reparation for it ; and till we do this, we continue in the sin. For if it was a sin, to do the injury at first, it is the same continued, not to make satisfaction ; and we do not cease to commit the sin, so long as we detain that which is another's right. Nothing but restitution can stop the progress of sin : for if it be a sin to

take

take that which is another man's from him by fraud or violence, it is the same continued and virtually repeated, to detain and keep it from him ; and nothing more contrary to repentance, than to continue in the sin thou pretendest to repent of. For how art thou sorry for doing of it, if thou continuest to do it, if thou wilt go on to do it and do it again ? How dost thou hate thy sin, if thou enjoy the benefit and reap the advantage of it ? If thou doest this, it is an argument thou lovest thy sin still : for thou didst never love it for itself, but for the profit of it ; and so long as thou retainest that, thou canst not be quit of the sin. Thou holdest fast thy sin so long as thou refusest to make satisfaction for it ; and repentance without restitution differs as much from true repentance, as continuance in sin does from the forsaking of it. *Si res aliena non redditur, non agitur penitentia, sed fingitur* ; so St. Augustine “ If we “ do not restore that which we have injuriously de- “ tained from another, our repentance is not real, “ but feigned and hypocritical,” and will not be effectual to the obtaining of our pardon. It is a very common, but a true and terrible saying, *Non dimittitur peccatum, nisi restituatur ablatum*, “ no re- “ mission without restitution.” If we will inherit the profit and advantage of sin, we cannot think it unreasonable or unjust that we should inherit the punishment of it.

When the scripture speaks of repentance, it frequently mentions restitution as a proper fruit and effect of it, and as a necessary and indispensable condition of pardon and life. Ezek. xxxiii. 14, 15, 16. “ Again, when I say unto the wicked, thou shalt “ surely die : if he turn from his sin, and do that “ which is lawful and right ; if the wicked restore “ the

As if he had said, when I denounce death and destruction to the wicked, there is but this one way to escape it, and that is by repentance ; but then take notice, what a repentance it is, that will avail to this end ; it is not a bewailing ourselves, and lamenting over our sins, but a forsaking of them and returning to our duty ; “ If we turn from our sin, and do that “ which is lawful and right.” For instance, if he have been guilty of injustice and oppression ; if he leave his course, and deal justly and righteously with his neighbour, and not only so, but he also make restitution for the injury he hath done, and restore what he hath unjustly detain’d and taken away ; “ if he restore the pledge, and give again that he hath “ robbed,” and do no injustice for the future, but “ walk in the statutes of life without committing “ iniquity ;” upon these terms and no other “ he “ shall live, he shall not die.” Yea the very light of nature could suggest thus much to the people of Nineveh, that there was no hope, without this fruit of repentance, of appeasing God’s wrath. Therefore the king and the princes, after all the external solemnity of fasting, and sackcloth, and crying mightily, they decree that “ every one should turn “ from the evil of his ways, and from the violence “ that was in their hands,” *ut rapina manus vacuefaciat, & rapta restituat, sine quo non est vera penitentia* ; so Grot. upon the place, “ that he empty “ his hands of the spoils of rapine and oppression,” that is, “ that he make restitution, without which “ there can be no repentance :” and upon their doing this, it is said, that “ God spared them, v. 10. “ and God saw their works, that they turned from “ their evil ways.” It is not said, that he saw their
fasting

fasting and sackcloth, but he saw their works, the real fruits and effects of their repentance ; and upon this it was that "God repented of the evil he said he " would do to them, and he did it not." And elsewhere we find, that God speaks with great indignation of the most solemn repentance, which is not accompanied with this fruit, Isa. lviii. 3, 4, 5, 6. The people tell God how "they had fasted and afflicted their " soul, and made their voice to be heard on high : " but God despiseth all this, because it was not accompanied with the fruit of repentance, " it is such " a fast as I have chosen," &c. There is so much of natural justice and equity in restitution, and it is so proper a fruit of repentance, that as Grotius observes, it is not only the doctrine of the Jews and Christians, but of Heathens and Mahometans, that the repentance which doth not produce this fruit is feigned, and will never avail with God for pardon and mercy. Thus much for confirmation of this doctrine.

The third and last thing I proposed was to persuade to the practice of this duty ; and this may serve by way of application of the doctrine of restitution. The use we shall make of it is,

First, To persuade men to the practice of this difficult duty. I doubt not but the arguments I have used are sufficient to convince us of the equity and necessity of restitution ; but what arguments shall I use to persuade to the practice and exercise of it ? When we press men to their duty, though we have some advantages on our side, yet we have also great disadvantages. We have this advantage, that we have the reason and consciences of men on our side : but then we have this disadvantage, that we have to contend either with the lusts or interests of men, or both : now that these are usually more powerful, is

evident, in that the lusts and interests of men do so frequently bias and draw them to do things contrary to reason and conscience. When we persuade men to be just, and to make restitution to those whom they have injured, it is true we have not to contend with the lusts of men, with any corrupt and vicious inclination of nature. There are some sins that have their rise from mens natural tempers, as passion and lust, and those sensual vices that abound in the world; but there's nothing in any man's natural temper and disposition that inclines him to be unjust, no man's complexion doth particularly dispose him to lie or steal, to defraud his neighbour, or detain his right from him; it is only the interests of men that prompt them to these things; and they are upon this account the more inexcusable, because no man is inclined to these sins from particular temper and constitution; so that an unjust man is in ordinary cases and circumstances a greater sinner, than a drunkard or a lustful man, because no man can pretend to be hurried away by the strong propension and inclination of his nature, to cheat his brother; but although when we persuade men to be just, we have not the lusts of men to contend withal, yet we have another powerful adversary, and that is the interests of men, which is one of the chief rulers and governors of this world; so that when we press men to restitution, we touch them in their interest, which is a very touchy and tender thing; when we tell them that without restitution no man can repent and be saved, they think this to be a very hard saying, and they know not how to bear it.

But certainly it hath all the reason and equity in the world on it's side. If it be so hard for them to restore that which is another man's, is it not much harder for him whom thou hast injured, to lose that
which

which is his own? Make it thine own case; wouldst thou not think it much harder to have thy right detained from thee by another, than for another to part with that which is not his own?

But I am sensible how little it is, that reason will sway with men against their interest; therefore the best argument that I can use will be to satisfy men, that upon a true and just account, it is not so much their interest, to retain what they have unjustly got, as to make restitution. And this I shall do by shewing men, that to make restitution is their true interest, both in respect of themselves, and of their posterity.

I. In respect to themselves. It is better both in respect of our present condition in this world, and of our future state.

1. In respect of our present condition in this world, and that both in respect of our outward estate, and our inward peace and tranquillity.

(1.) In respect of our outward estate. If we have any belief of the providence of God, that his blessing can prosper an estate, and his curse consume it and make it moulder away, we cannot but judge it highly our interest to clear our estates of injustice by restitution; and by this means to free them from God's curse. For if any of our estate be unjustly gotten, it is enough to draw down God's curse upon all that we have; it is like a moth in our estate, which will insensibly consume it; it is like a secret poison, which will diffuse itself through the whole; like a little land *in capite*, which brings the whole estate into wardship.

Hear how God threatens to blast estates unjustly gotten, Job xx. 12, &c. concluding with these words, "this is the portion of a wicked man," that is, of an unjust man. Jer. xvii. 11. "As a partridge sitteth

“ on eggs, and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth
 “ riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the
 “ midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.”

Men many times live to see the folly of their injustice and oppression, and their estates wither away before their eyes; and by the just revenge of God they are deprived of them in the midst of their days. So that the best way to fix an estate, and to secure it to ourselves, is by restitution to free it from God's curse; and when we have done that, how much soever we may diminish our estate by it, we may look upon ourselves as having a better estate than we had; better, because we have God's blessing with that which remains. If we believe the bible, we cannot doubt of this. The Spirit of God tells us this from the observation of the wisest men, Psal. xxxvii. 16.
 “ A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the
 “ riches of many wicked.” Prov. xvi. 8. “ Better
 “ is a little with righteousness, than great revenues
 “ without right.”

(2.) In respect of inward peace and tranquillity, it is highly our interest to make restitution. No man can enjoy an estate, that does not enjoy himself; and nothing puts a man more out of the possession of himself, than an unquiet conscience; and there are no kind of sins lye heavier upon a man's conscience, than those of injustice; because they are committed against the clearest natural light, and there is the least natural temptation to them. They have these two great aggravations, that they are sins most against knowledge, and have most of will in them. There needs no revelation to convince men of sins of injustice and oppression; every man hath those principles born with him, which will sufficiently acquaint him, that he ought not to be injurious to another.
 There

There is nothing that relates to our duty, that a man can know with greater certainty than this, that injustice is a sin. And as it is a sin most against knowledge, so it hath most of will in it. Men are hurried away to other sins by the strong and violent propensions of their nature : but no man is inclined by his temper and constitution, to fraud and oppression ; and the less there is of nature in any sin, there is the less of necessity, and consequently it is the more voluntary. Now the greater the aggravations of any sin are, the greater is the guilt ; and the greater the guilt is, the more unquiet our consciences will be : so that if thou have any regard to the interest of thine own peace, if that be considerable to thee, which to wise men is the most valuable thing in the world, do not for a little wealth continue in those sins, which will create perpetual disturbance to thee, and imbitter all the pleasures of thy life. Hear how Job describes the condition of the wicked oppressors in the place before cited, Job xx. 12, &c. “ He shall not
“ rejoice in them, because he hath oppressed, because
“ he hath violently taken away a house which he
“ builded not, surely he shall not feel quietness in his
“ belly :” that is, he shall have no inward peace and contentment in the midst of all his outward enjoyments ; but his ill-gotten estate will work in his conscience, and gripe him, as if a man had taken down poison into his belly.

2. But chiefly, in respect of our future estate in another world, it is every man’s interest to make restitution. Without repentance we are ruined for ever, and without restitution no repentance. “ No
“ unrighteous man hath any inheritance in the kingdom of CHRIST.” If thou continue in thy fraud and oppression, and carry these sins with thee into
another

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another world, they will hang as a millstone about thy neck, and sink thee into eternal ruin. He that wrongs his brother hates him, and "he that hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," 1 John iii. 15. Rom. i. 18. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." So that if it be mens interest to escape the wrath of God, it concerns us to make reparation for those injuries which will expose us to it. That is a dreadful text, Jam. v. 1, 2, 3, 4. "Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten: your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire: ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold! the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth; and the cries of them which have reaped, are entered into the ears of the LORD of Sabaoth." Do not by "detaining the treasures of wickedness, treasure up to yourselves wrath against the day of wrath:" do not make yourselves "miserable for ever," that you may be "rich for a little while:" do not for a little "silver and gold," forfeit "the eternal inheritance," which "was not purchased with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of the Son of God:" And if this consideration, which is the weightiest in the world, will not prevail with men, I can only say with the angel, Rev. xxii. 11. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still," let him continue in his injustice at his peril, and remember what is added at the 12th verse, "Behold! I come

“ quickly, and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.”

II. In respect of our children and posterity, it is greatly our interest to make restitution. God many times suffers an estate got by oppression to prosper for a little while : but there is a curse attends it, which descends upon the estate like an incumbrance ; and parents many times when they think they entail an estate, they entail poverty upon their children, Job xx. 10. speaking of the children of the oppressor, he saith, “ his children shall seek to please the poor, “ and his hands shall restore their goods.” And Job xxi. 19. “ God layeth up his iniquity for his “ children.” Thou layest up riches for thy children ; and “ God lays up thine iniquity” and injustice “ for them,” the curse that belongs to them. Hab. ii. 9, 10, 11. “ Wo unto him that coveteth “ an evil covetousness, or gaineth an evil gain to his “ house,” &c. Thou thoughtest to raise thy family by those ways ; but “ thou hast consulted shame “ to thy house.” No such effectual way to ruin thy family, as injustice and oppression. As then you would not transmit a curse to your children, and devolve misery upon your family, free your estates from the burden and weight of what is other mens, left by God’s just judgment and secret providence, that little which you injuriously detain from others, carry away your whole estate to them and their family. God’s providence many times makes abundant restitution, when we will not.

Having now endeavoured to satisfy men, that it is their truest interest, to make restitution for the injuries they have done to others, it remains only that I should answer an objection or two, which men are apt to make against this duty.

First,

First, Men say they are ashamed to do it. *Ans.* It is not matter of shame, but of praise and commendation. But it may be thou wilt say, it is matter of shame to have injured another, and this is the way to lay open thy shame. Indeed if the injury were publick, the restitution ought to be so too, as the only way to take off the shame of the injury. For thy restitution doth not in this case publish thy shame, but thy honesty : but if the injury was private, thou mayst preserve thy own credit by concealing thyself ; and provided thou do the thing effectually, thou mayst be as prudent, as to the manner of doing it as thou plearest.

Secondly, Another objection is the prejudice it will be to mens estates. But this I have answered already, by shewing that it is more their interest to make restitution, than to continue in the sin. I shall only add, that, as our SAVIOUR reasons in another case, “ it is profitable for thee, that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body should be cast into hell : ” it is true likewise here, it is profitable for thee, that thou shouldst go a beggar to heaven, rather than that thou shouldst go to hell, laden with the spoils and guilt of rapine and injustice.

Thirdly, The last objection that I shall mention, is disability to make restitution. This indeed is something ; where nothing is to be had, every man must lose his right : but then remember, that there must be a hearty repentance for the sin ; and thy sorrow must be so much greater, by how much thy ability to make restitution is less ; and there must be a willing mind, a firm purpose and resolution of doing it, when God shall enable thee, and diligent endeavours to that purpose. Under the law those who
were

were not able to make restitution, were sold for six years, if their service did not make reparation in less time. It is true indeed, the moderation of the gospel does not suffer Christians to deal so hardly with another : but if the gospel remit of this rigour, and do not allow Christians to challenge it, we should voluntarily do in effect that which they were forced to, that is, we should use our best endeavours and diligence to put ourselves into a condition of making satisfaction ; and we should not look upon any thing beyond the necessary conveniencies of life as our own, till we have done it ; unless the party injured will recede from his right, in whole or in part. For though the impossibility of the thing do discharge us for the present, yet the obligation still lyes upon us to do it, so soon as we are able.

And here it will be proper to consider the case of those, who have compounded with their creditors for a small part, whether they be in conscience and equity released from the whole debt. I am loth to lay unnecessary burdens upon mens consciences, therefore I am very tender in resolving such cases : but I ought to have a more tender care of the souls of men, than of their estates : therefore to deal plainly, and to discharge my conscience in this matter, I think such persons do, notwithstanding the composition, stand oblig'd in equity and conscience for the whole debt, and are bound to discharge it, so soon as they can with tolerable convenience. My reason is, because, though they be discharged in law, yet the law does not intend to take off the obligation of conscience or equity, which they are under ; but leaves that as it found it. Thus the case stands ; men who are in a way of trade are engaged by the necessities of their calling, to venture a great part of their

estate in other mens hands, and by this means become liable many times to be undone without their own fault; therefore it is usual, when any man in a way of trade becomes disabled, for the creditors to make such a composition with him, as his estate will bear, and upon this composition to give him a full discharge, so as that they cannot afterwards by law require of him the remainder of their debt. Now though this be a favour to the debtor, yet it is principally intended for the benefit of the creditor; because it being his act, it is to be presumed, that he intended it as much as may be, for his own advantage; and so it is, for the creditor has as much satisfaction at present as can be had, and the debtor is hereby left in a capacity of recovering himself again by his industry and diligence, which could not be, if he were not fully discharged; for if he were still liable for the rest, he would continually be obnoxious to imprisonment, which would render him incapable of following his calling; or if he were at liberty, he could have no credit to enable him to do any thing in his calling; for who would trust a man with any thing, who is liable every moment to have it taken from him? So that the reason of this plenary discharge is this, that men, who are otherwise hopeful, and in a fair probability of recovering themselves, may not be rendered incapable of getting an estate afterwards, whereby they may support themselves, and discharge their debts. Now this discharge being given in order to these ends, it cannot be imagined that it should be intended to defeat them; but it is in all reason to be supposed, that the creditors did not intend to take off the obligation of equity and conscience, only to put the man into a condition of doing something towards the enabling him to discharge his debt. So that

that unless it were exprefs'd at the composition, that the creditor would never expect more from him, upon any account of equity and conscience, but did freely forgive him the rest, the contrary whereof is usually done; I say, unless it were thus exprefs'd, there is no reason why the creditor's favour in making a composition should be abused to his prejudice; and why a legal discharge, given him on purpose for this reason among others, to put him into a capacity of recovering himself and giving full satisfaction, should be so interpreted, as to extinguish the equitable right of the creditor to the remainder of his debt.

The second use of this doctrine of restitution should be by way of prevention, that men would take heed of being injurious, and so take away the occasion of restitution, and free themselves from the temptation of not performing so difficult and so unwelcome a duty. It is much easier of the two, not to cozen or oppress thy neighbour, than after thou hast done it, it will be to bring thyself to make restitution: therefore we should be very careful, not to be injurious to any one in any kind; neither immediately by ourselves, nor by aiding and assisting others, by our power and interest, or skill in the law, or by any other way, to do injustice.

S E R M O N CLXXII.

The usefulness of consideration, in order
to repentance.

DEUT. xxxii. 29.

*O that they were wise, that they understood this, that
they would consider their latter end!*

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THIS chapter is called Moses his song, in which he briefly recounts the various providences of God toward the people of Israel, and the froward carriage of that people towards him.

First, He puts them in mind how God had chosen them for his peculiar people, and had by a signal care and providence conducted them all that tedious journey, for the space of forty years in the wilderness, till he had brought them to the promised land, which they had now begun to take possession of.

And then he foretels, how they would behave themselves after all this mercy and kindness God had shewn to them, ver. 15. "Jesurun waxed fat, and
" kicked, and forsook God which made him, and
" lightly esteemed the rock of his salvation." Upon this he tells them, God would be extremely displeased with them, and would multiply his judgments upon them, ver. 19, 20. "When the Lord
" saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provok-
" ing of his sons and of his daughters; and he said,
" I will hide my face from them, I will see what
" their end shall be: for they are a very froward
" generation, children in whom is no faith." And
ver. 23. "I will heap mischief upon them, I will
" spend

“ spend mine arrows upon them.” And then he enumerates the particular judgments which he would send upon them: nay, he declares he would have utterly consumed them, but that he was loth to give occasion of so much triumph to his and their enemies, v. 26, 27. “ I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: were it not, that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, our hand is high, and the LORD hath not done all this.” And he adds the reason of all this severity; because they were so very stupid and inconsiderate, v. 28. “ For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them.”

And in the conclusion of all, he represents God as it were breaking out into this vehement and affectionate wish, “ O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end !”

“ O that they were wise, that they understood this !” What is that ? This may refer to all that went before. O that they were wise to consider what God had done for them, and what they had done against him, and what he will do against them, if they continue or renew their former provocations ! O that they were but duly apprehensive of this, and would lay it seriously to heart !

But from what follows, it seems more particularly to refer to those particular judgments, which God had threatened them withal, and which would certainly befall them, if they still continued in their disobedience. “ O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their lat-

“ ter

“ter end!” that is, the sad consequences of these their provocations, that by the consideration thereof, they might prevent all those evils and calamities, by turning from those sins which would unavoidably bring them upon them.

From the words thus explained, I shall observe these four things.

I. That GOD doth really and heartily desire the happiness of men, and to prevent their misery and ruin. For the very design of these words is to express this to us, and it is done in a very vehement, and, as I may say, passionate manner.

II. That it is a great point of wisdom to consider seriously the last issue and consequence of our actions, whither they tend, and what will follow upon them. And therefore wisdom is here described by “the consideration of our latter end.”

III. That this is an excellent means to prevent that misery, which will otherwise befall us. And this is necessarily implied in this wish, that if they would but consider these things, they might be prevented.

IV. That the want of this consideration is the great cause of mens ruin. And this is likewise implied in the words, that one great reason of mens ruin is, because they are not so wise, as to consider the fatal issue and consequence of a sinful course. I shall speak briefly to each of these.

I. That GOD doth really and heartily desire the happiness of men, and to prevent their misery and ruin. To express this to us, GOD doth put on the vehemency of a human passion, “O that they were “wise,” &c. The laws of GOD are a clear evidence of this; because the observance of them tends to our happiness. There is no good prince makes laws with any other design, than to promote the
“publick

publick welfare and happiness of his people : and with much more reason may we imagine, that the infinite good God does by all his laws design the happiness of his creatures. And the exhortations of scripture, by which he enforceth his laws, are yet a greater evidence how earnestly he desires the happiness of his creatures. For it shews that he is concerned for us, when he useth so many arguments to persuade us to our duty, and when he expostulates so vehemently with us for our neglect of it, saying to sinners, “ Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel?” “ Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life,” says our blessed SAVIOUR, with great trouble to see men so obstinately set against their own happiness ; and again, “ How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not !” And to satisfy us yet farther, that it is his real desire, by our obedience to his laws, to prevent our ruin, God does frequently in scripture put on the passions of men, and use all sorts of vehement expressions to this purpose, Deut. v. 29. “ O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever !” And Psal. lxxxi. 13. “ O that my people had hearkned unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways ! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.” Jer. xiii. 27. “ O Israel ! wilt thou not be made clean ? When shall it once be ?” And to name but one text more, when our blessed SAVIOUR wept over Jerusalem, how passionately does he wish that “ she had known in that her day, the things that belonged to her peace !”

And if after all this we can doubt whether the faithful God means as he says, he hath for our farther assurance, and to put the matter out of all doubt, confirmed his word by an oath, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. "As I live, saith the LORD GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" So that if words can be any declaration of a hearty and sincere desire, we have no reason to doubt, but that God does really desire the happiness of men, and would gladly prevent their ruin and destruction.

If any now ask, Why then are not all men happy? Why do they not escape ruin and destruction? And particularly why the people of Israel, for whom God here makes this wish, did not escape those judgments which were threatened; the prophet shall answer for me, Hof. xiii. 9. "O Israel! thou hast destroyed thyself." And David, Psal. lxxxi. 11. "My people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would none of me." And our blessed SAVIOUR, Matt. xxiii. 37. "How often would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" And John v. 40. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." You see what account the scripture plainly gives of this matter; it rests upon the wills of men, and God hath not thought fit to force happiness upon men, and to make them wise and good whether they will or no. He presents men with such motives, and offers such arguments to their consideration, as are fit to prevail with reasonable men, and is ready to afford them all necessary assistance, if they be not wanting to themselves; but if they will not be

be wise and consider, if they will stand out against all the arguments that God can offer, if they will receive the grace of God in vain, and resist his blessed Spirit, and reject the counsel of God against themselves, God hath not in this case engaged himself to provide any remedy against the obstinacy and perverseness of men, but "their destruction is of themselves, and their blood shall be upon their own heads." And there is no nicety and intricacy in this matter; but if men will consider scripture and reason impartially, they will find this to be the plain resolution of the case.

So that no man hath reason either to charge his fault, or his punishment upon God; he is "free from the blood of all men;" he sincerely desires our happiness; but we wilfully ruin ourselves: and when he tells, that "he desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live; that he would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth; that he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; he plainly means as he says, and doth not speak to us with any reserve, or dark distinction between his secret and revealed will, he does not decree one thing, and declare another.

And if this be so, no man hath reason to be discouraged from attempting and endeavouring his own happiness, upon a jealousy and surmise that God hath by any fatal decree put a bar to it from all eternity: for if he had so absolutely resolved to make the greatest part of mankind miserable, without any respect to their actions in this world, he would never have said, that "he desires that all should be saved;" he would not have exhorted all men "to work out

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“ their own salvation :” had he taken up any such resolution, he would have declared it to all the world : for he hath power enough in his hand, “ to do what he pleaseth, and none can resist his will ;” so that he did not need to have dissembled the matter, and to have pretended a desire to save men, when he was resolved to ruin them.

This is the first, that God doth really and heartily desire the happiness of men, and to prevent their misery and ruin. I proceed to the

II. That it is a great part of wisdom to consider seriously the last issue and consequence of our actions, and whither the course of life which we lead does tend, and what will follow upon it. And therefore wisdom is here explained by consideration, “ O that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end !” that is, what will befall them hereafter, what will be the issue and consequence of all the sins and provocations which they are guilty of.

And this is a principal point and property of wisdom, to look forward, and not only to consider the present pleasure and advantage of any action, but the future consequence of it : and there is no greater argument of an imprudent man, than to gratify himself for the present in the doing of a thing, which will turn to his greater prejudice afterwards ; especially if the future inconvenience be great and intolerable, as it is in the case we are speaking of. For eternal happiness or misery depends upon the actions of this present life, and according as we behave ourselves in this world, it will go well or ill with us forever ; so that this is a matter of vast importance, and deserves our most serious thoughts ; and in matters of mighty consequence, a wise man will take all things into consideration, and look before him as far

as he can. And indeed this is the reason why things of great moment are said to be things of consequence, because great things depend and are likely to follow upon them : and then surely that is the greatest concernment, upon which not only the happiness of this present life, but our happiness to all eternity does depend ; and if the good and bad actions of this life be of that consequence to us, it is fit every man should consider what he does, and whither the course of life he is engaged or about to engage in, will lead him at last. For this is true wisdom, to look to the end of things, and to think seriously beforehand, what is likely to be the event of such an action, of such a course of life : if we serve God faithfully and do his will, what will be the consequence of that to us in this world, and the other : and on the other hand, if we live wickedly, and allow ourselves in any unlawful and vicious practice, what will be the end of that course.

And to any man that consults the law of his own nature, or the will of God revealed in scripture, nothing can be plainer than what will be the end of these several ways. God hath plainly told us, and our own consciences will tell us the same, that “if we do well, we shall be accepted” of God, and rewarded by him : but if we do ill, “the end of these things is death ;” that “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish will be upon every soul of man that doth evil ; but honour and glory and peace to every man that doth good, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus CHRIST, according to the gospel.”

So that God hath given us a plain prospect of the different issues of a virtuous and a wicked life, and there wants nothing but consideration to make us to

attend to these things, and to lay them seriously to heart. For while men are inconsiderate, they go on stupidly in an evil way, and are not sensible of the danger of their present course, because they do not attend to the consequence of it: but when their eyes are once opened by consideration, they cannot but be sadly apprehensive of the mischief they are running themselves upon. If men would take but a serious and impartial view of their lives and actions, if they would consider the tendency of a sinful course, and whither it will bring them at last; if the vicious and dissolute man would but look about him, and consider how many have been ruined in that very way that he is in, how many lye “ slain and wounded “ in it; that it is the way to hell, and leads down “ to the chambers of death;” the serious thought of this could not but check him in his course, and make him resolve upon a better life. If men were wise, they would consider the consequence of their actions, and upon consideration would resolve upon that which they are convinced is best. I proceed to the

III. Thing I propounded, which was, that consideration of the consequence of our actions is an excellent means to prevent the mischiefs, which otherwise we should run into. And this is necessarily implied in the wish here in the text, that if we would but consider these things, they might be prevented. For how can any man, who hath any love or regard for himself, any tenderness for his own interest and happiness, see hell and destruction before him, which, if he hold on in his evil course, will certainly swallow him up, and yet venture to go on in his sins? Can any man that plainly beholds misery hastening towards him “ like an armed man, and destruction “ coming upon him as a whirlwind,” think himself unconcerned

unconcerned to prevent it and flee from it? The most dull and stupid creatures will start back upon the sight of present danger. Balaam's ass, when she saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, with his sword drawn ready to smite her, starts aside, and could not be urged on. Now God hath given us, not only sense to apprehend a present evil, but reason and consideration to look before us, and to discover dangers at a distance, to apprehend them as certainly, and with as clear a conviction of the reality of them, as if they threatened us the next moment: and will any considerate man, who hath calculated the dangerous events of sin, and the dreadful effects of God's wrath upon sinners, go on to "provoke the LORD to jealousy, as if he were stronger than he?" It is not to be imagined, but that if men would seriously consider what sin is, and what shall be the sad portion of sinners hereafter, they would resolve upon a better course. Would any man live in the lusts of the flesh, and of intemperance, or out of covetousness defraud or oppress his neighbour, did he seriously consider, that "God is the avenger of such;" and that "because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience."

I should have great hopes of men's repentance and reformation, if they could but once be brought to consideration: for in most men it is not so much a positive disbelief of the truth, as inadvertency and want of consideration, that makes them to go on so securely in a sinful course. Would but men consider what sin is, and what will be the fearful consequence of it, probably in this world, but most certainly in the other, they could not chuse but fly from it as the greatest evil in the world.

The usefulness of consideration,

And to shew what power and influence consideration will probably have to bring men to repentance, and a change of their lives, I remember to have somewhere met with a very remarkable story, of one that had a son that took bad courses, and would not be reclaimed by all the good counsel his father could give him; at last coming to his father, who lay upon his death-bed, to beg his blessing, his father instead of upbraiding him with his bad life, and undutiful carriage toward him, spake kindly to him, and told him he had but one thing to desire of him, that every day he would retire and spend one quarter of an hour alone by himself; which he promised his father faithfully to do, and made it good. After a while it grew tedious to him, to spend even so little time in such bad and uneasy company, and he began to bethink himself, for what reason his father should so earnestly desire of him to do so odd a thing for his sake, and his mind presently suggested to him, that it was to enforce him to consideration; wisely judging that if by any means he could but bring him to that, he would soon reform his life and become a new man. And the thing had its desired effect; for after a very little consideration, he took up a firm resolution to change the course of his life, and was true to it all his days. I cannot answer for the truth of the story, but for the moral of it I will; namely, that consideration is one of the best and most likely means in the world, to bring a bad man to a better mind. I now come to the

IV. and last particular, namely, that the want of this consideration is one of the greatest causes of mens ruin. And this likewise is implied in the text; and the reason why God does so vehemently desire that men would be wise and consider, is, because so many

are

are ruined and undone for want of it. This is the desperate folly of mankind, that they seldom think seriously of the consequence of their actions, and least of all of such as are of greatest concernment to them, and have the chief influence upon their eternal condition. They do not consider what mischief and inconvenience a wicked life may plunge them into in this world, what trouble and disturbance it may give them when they come to die ; what horror and confusion it may fill them withal when they are leaving this world, and passing into eternity ; and what intolerable misery and torment it may bring upon them to all eternity. Did men ponder and lay to heart death and judgment, heaven and hell ; and would they but let their thoughts dwell upon these things, it is not credible that the generality of men could lead such profane and impious, such lewd and dissolute, such secure and careless lives as they do.

Would but a man frequently entertain his mind with such thoughts as these ; I must shortly die and leave this world, and then all the pleasures and enjoyments of it will be to me as if they had never been, only that the remembrance of them, and the ill use I have made of them, will be very bitter and grievous to me ; after all, death will transmit me out of this world, into a quite different state and scene of things, into the presence of that great and terrible, that inflexible and impartial judge, who will “ render to every man according to his works ;” and then all the evils which I have done in this life, will rise up in judgment against me, and fill me with everlasting confusion, in that great assembly of men and angels, will banish me from the presence of God, and all the happiness which flows from it, and procure a dreadful sentence of unspeakable misery and torment

torment to be past upon me, which I can never get reversed, nor yet ever be able to stand under the weight of it. If men would but enter into the serious consideration of these things, and pursue these thoughts to some issue and conclusion, they would take up other resolutions; and I verily believe, that the want of this hath ruined more than even infidelity itself. And this I take to be the meaning of that question in the Psalmist, “Have all the workers of iniquity “no knowledge?” that is, no consideration; intimating that if they had, they would do better.

All that now remains, is to persuade men to apply their hearts to this piece of wisdom, to look before them, and to think seriously of the consequence of their actions, what will be the final issue of that course of life they are engaged in; and if they continue in it, what will become of them hereafter, what will become of them for ever.

And here I might apply this text, as God here does to the people of Israel, to the publick condition of this nation, which is not so very unlike to that of the people of Israel: for God seems to have chosen this nation for his more peculiar people, and hath exercised a very particular providence towards us, in conducting us through that wilderness of confusion, in which we have been wandering for the space of above forty years; and when things were come to the last extremity, and we seemed to stand upon the very brink of ruin, “Then (as it is said of the people of Israel, ver. 36. of this chapter) “God “repented himself for his servants, when he saw “their power was gone:” that is, that they were utterly unable to help themselves, and to work their own deliverance. And it may be said of us, as Moses does of that people, chap. xxxiii. 29.

“Happy

“ Happy art thou, O Israel, O people saved by the
“ LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the
“ sword of thy excellency !” Never did any nation
struggle with, and get through so many and so great
difficulties, as we have several times done.

And I fear we have behaved ourselves towards God,
not much better than the people of Israel did, but
like Jesurun, after many deliverances and great mer-
cies, “ have waxed fat and kicked, have forsaken
“ the God that made us, and little esteemed the
“ rock of our salvation ;” by which we have “ pro-
“ voked the LORD to jealousy,” and have as it
were forced him to multiply his judgments, and to
spend his arrows upon us, and “ to hide his face from
“ us, to see what our end will be ;” so that we have
reason to fear, that God would have brought utter
ruin and destruction upon us, and “ scattered us in-
“ to corners, and made the remembrance of us to
“ have ceased from among men, had he not feared
“ the wrath of the enemy, and lest the adversaries
“ should have behaved themselves strangely, and lest
“ they should say, our hand is high, and the LORD
“ hath not done all this ;” that is, lest they should
ascribe this just vengeance of God upon a sinful and
unthankful nation to the goodness and righteousness
of their own cause, and to the favour and assistance
of the idols and false gods whom they worshipped,
to the patronage and aid of the virgin Mary and
the saints ; to whom, contrary to the will and com-
mand of the true God, they had offer’d up so many
prayers and vows, and paid the greatest part of their
religious worship. But “ the LORD hath shewn
“ himself greater than all gods, and in the things
“ wherein they dealt proudly, that he is above them :

“ for our rock is not as their rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.”

And we have been too like the people of Israel in other respects also, so fickle and inconstant, that after great deliverances we are apt presently to murmur and be discontented, to grow sick of our own happiness, and “ to turn back in our hearts into Egypt;” so that God may complain of us, as he does of his people Israel, that nothing that he could do would bring them to consideration, and make them better, neither his mercies nor his judgments. Isa. i. 2, 3.

“ Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! For the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s

crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” And so likewise he complains;

that his judgments had no effect upon them, ver. 5. “ Why should ye be smitten any more? Ye will revolt more and more.” Well therefore may it be said of us, as it was of them in the verse before the text, “ they are a nation void of knowledge, neither is there any understanding in them.” And the wish that follows in the text is as seasonable for us as it was for them, “ O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!”

And by parity of reason, this may likewise be applied to particular persons, and to persuade every one of us to a serious consideration of the final issue and consequence of our actions, I will only offer these two arguments.

I. That consideration is the proper act of reasonable creatures, and that whereby we shew ourselves men. So the prophet intimates, Isa. xlv. 8. “Remember

“ remember this, and shew yourselves men ; bring it
“ again to mind, O ye transgressors !” that is, con-
sider it well, think of it again and again, ye that run
on so furiously in a sinful course, what the end and
issue of these things will be. If ye do not do this,
you do not “ shew yourselves men,” you do not
act like reasonable creatures, to whom it is pecu-
liar to propose to themselves some end and design
of their actions ; but rather like “ brute creatures,
“ which have no understanding,” and act only by
a natural instinct, without any consideration of the
end of their actions, or of the means conducing to it.

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II. Whether we consider it or not, our latter end
will come ; and all those dismal consequences of a
sinful course, which God hath so plainly threatened,
and our own consciences do so much dread, will cer-
tainly overtake us at last ; and we cannot, by not
thinking of these things, ever prevent or avoid them.
Death will come, and after that the judgment, and
an irreversibile doom will pass upon us, according to
all the evil that we have done, and all the good that
we have neglected to do in this life, under the heavy
weight and pressure whereof we must lye groaning,
and bewailing ourselves to everlasting ages.

God now exerciseth his mercy and patience and
long-suffering towards us, in expectation of our
amendment ; he reprieves us on purpose that we may
repent, and in hopes that we will at last consider and
grow wiser ; for “ he is not willing that any should
“ perish, but that all should come to repentance :”
but if we will trifle away this day of God’s grace
and patience, if we will not consider and bethink
ourselves, there is another day that will certainly
come, “ that great and terrible day of the LORD,
“ in which the heavens shall pass away with a great
“ noise,

“ noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent
 “ heat ; the earth also, and the works that are there-
 “ in shall be burnt up.”

“ Seeing then all these things shall be,” let us con-
 sider seriously “ what manner of persons we ought to
 “ be in all holy conversation and godliness, waiting
 “ for and hastening unto the coming of the day of
 “ God ; to whom be glory now and for ever.”

S E R M O N CLXXIII.

The danger of impenitence, where the
 gospel is preached.

M A T T. xi. 21, 22.

*Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida!
 for if the mighty works which were done in you,
 had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have
 repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I
 say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and
 Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.*

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AFTER our blessed SAVIOUR had instructed,
 and sent forth his disciples, he himself went
 abroad to preach unto the cities of Israel ; particu-
 larly he spent much time in the cities of Galilee, Cho-
 razin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, preaching the
 gospel to them, and working many and great mira-
 cles among them ; but with little or no success :
 which was the cause of his denouncing this terrible
 woe against them, ver. 20. “ Then began he to
 “ upbraid the cities, wherein most of his mighty
 “ works

“ works were done, because they repented not. Woe
“ unto thee Chorazin,” &c.

In which words our SAVIOUR declares the sad and miserable condition of those two cities, Chorazin and Bethsaida, which had neglected such an opportunity, and resisted and withstood such means of repentance, as would have effectually reclaimed the most wicked cities and people that can be instanced in any age, Tyre and Sidon and Sodom ; and therefore he tells them, that their condition was much worse, and that they should fall under a heavier sentence at the day of judgment, than the people of those cities, whom they had always looked upon as the greatest sinners that ever were in the world. This is the plain meaning of the words in general ; but yet there are some difficulties in them, which I shall endeavour to clear, and then proceed to raise such observations from them, as may be instructive and useful to us.

The difficulties are these :

I. What repentance is here spoken of ; whether an external repentance, in shew and appearance only, or an inward and real and sincere repentance.

II. In what sense it is said, that “ Tyre and Sidon
“ would have repented.”

III. What is meant by their “ would have repented
“ ed long ago.”

IV. How this assertion of our SAVIOUR, that miracles would have converted Tyre and Sidon, is reconcilable with that other saying of his, Luk. xvi. 31. in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that “ those who believed not Moses and the prophets,
“ neither would they be persuaded, though one rose
“ from the dead.”

I. What repentance is here spoken of ; whether a mere external and hypocritical repentance in shew
and

SER M. and appearance only, or an inward and real and sincere repentance.
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The reason of this doubt depends upon the different theories of divines, about the sufficiency of grace accompanying the outward means of repentance, and whether an irresistible degree of God's grace be necessary to repentance: for they who deny sufficient grace to accompany the outward means of repentance, and assert an irresistible degree of God's grace necessary to repentance, are forced to say, that our SAVIOUR here speaks of a mere external repentance: because if he spake of an inward and sincere repentance, then it must be granted, that sufficient inward grace did accompany the miracles that were wrought in Chorazin and Bethsaida, to bring men to repentance; because what was afforded to them, would have brought Tyre and Sidon to repentance. And that which would have effected a thing, cannot be denied to be sufficient; so that unless our SAVIOUR here speaks of a mere external repentance, either the outward means of repentance, as preaching and miracles, must be granted to be sufficient to bring men to repentance, without the inward operation of GOD's grace upon the minds of men; or else a sufficient degree of GOD's grace must be acknowledged to accompany the outward means of repentance. Again, if an irresistible degree of grace be necessary to true repentance, it is plain, Chorazin and Bethsaida had it not, because they did not repent; and yet without this Tyre and Sidon could not sincerely have repented; therefore our SAVIOUR here must speak of a mere external repentance. Thus some argue, as they do likewise concerning the repentance of Nineveh, making that also to be merely external, because they are loth to allow true repentance to heathens.

But

But it seems very plain, that our SAVIOUR does speak of an inward and true and sincere repentance ; and therefore the doctrines that will not admit this, are not true. For our SAVIOUR speaks of the same kind of repentance, that he upbraided them with the want of, in the verse before the text. “ Then began he “ to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty “ works were done, because they repented not ; ” that is, because they were not brought to a sincere repentance by his preaching, which was confirmed by such great miracles. It is true indeed, he mentions the outward signs and expressions of repentance, when he says, “ they would have repented in sack- “ cloth and ashes ; ” but not as excluding inward and real repentance, but supposing it, as is evident from what is said in the next verse, “ It shall be more “ tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judg- “ ment, than for you : ” for though an external and hypocritical repentance may prevail with GOD to put off temporal judgments, yet surely it will be but a very small, if any mitigation of our condemnation at the day of judgment : so that the repentance here spoken of cannot, without great violence to the scope and design of our SAVIOUR’s argument, be understood only of an external shew and appearance of repentance.

II. The next difficulty to be cleared, is, in what sense it is here said, that “ if the mighty works “ which were done ” by our SAVIOUR among the Jews, “ had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they “ would have repented.”

Some to avoid the inconvenience which they apprehend to be in the more strict and literal sense of the words, look upon them as hyperbolical, as we say such a thing would move a stone, or the like, when we would express something to be very sad and
grievous ;

grievous ; so here to aggravate the impenitence of the Jews, our SAVIOUR says, that they resisted those means of repentance, which one would think should almost have prevailed upon the greatest and most obdurate sinners that ever were ; but not intending to affirm any such thing.

But there is no colour for this, if we consider that our SAVIOUR reasons from the supposition of such a thing, that therefore the case of Tyre and Sidon would really be “ more tolerable at the day of judgment than theirs ;” because they would have repented, but the Jews did not.

Others perhaps understand the words too strictly, as if our SAVIOUR had spoken according to what he certainly foreknew would have happened to the people of Tyre and Sidon, if such miracles had been wrought among them. And no doubt but in that case GOD did certainly know what they would have done : but yet I should rather chuse to understand the words as spoken popularly, according to what in all human appearance and probability would have happened, if such external means of repentance, accompanied with an ordinary grace of GOD, had been afforded to them of Tyre and Sidon. And thus the old Latin interpreter seems to have understood the next words, “ if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, *ἐμείναν ἂν*,” forte mansissent, “ it would perhaps have remained to this day, in all likelihood it had continued till now.” Much the same with that passage of the prophet, Ezek. iii. 5, 6. “ Thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech, and of a hard language, but to the house of Israel : Surely had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee ;” that is, in all probability they would, there

there is little doubt to be made of the contrary. And this is sufficient foundation for our SAVIOUR's reasoning afterwards, that "it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for them." And if we may judge what they would have done before, by what they did afterward, there is more than probability for it : for we read in the 21st chapter of the Acts, ver. 3. and ver. 27. that the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon received the gospel, and kindly entertained St. Paul, when the Jews rejected them both. The

III. Thing to be cleared, is, what is meant by long ago ; " they would have repented long ago."

Some understand this, as if our SAVIOUR had said, they would not have stood out so long against so much preaching, and so many miracles ; but would at first have repented, long before our SAVIOUR gave over Chorazin and Bethsaida for obstinate and incorrigible sinners ; they would not only have repented at last, but much sooner and without so much ado.

But this does not seem to be the meaning of the words ; but our SAVIOUR seems to refer to those ancient times long ago, when the prophets denounced judgments against Tyre and Sidon, particularly the prophet Ezekiel ; and to say, that if in those days the preaching of that prophet had been accompanied with such miracles as our SAVIOUR wrought in the cities of Galilee, Tyre and Sidon would in those days have repented.

The last and greatest difficulty of all is, how this assertion of our SAVIOUR, that miracles would have converted Tyre and Sidon, is reconcilable with that discourse of our SAVIOUR's, Luke xvi. in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, that " those

“ who would not believe Moses and the prophets,
 “ would not have been persuaded, though one had
 “ rose from the dead.”

The true answer to which difficulty in short is this ; that when our SAVIOUR says, “ if they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead,” he does not hereby weaken the force of miracles, or their aptness to convince men and bring them to repentance, but rather confirm it ; because Moses and the prophets had the attestation of many and great miracles, and therefore there was no reason to think, that they who would not believe the writings and doctrine of Moses and the prophets, which had the confirmation of so many miracles, and was owned by themselves to have so, should be wrought upon by one particular miracle, “ the coming of one from the dead, and speaking unto them :” or however this might move and astonish them for the present, yet it was not likely that the grace of GOD should concur with such an extraordinary means, to render it effectual to their conversion and repentance, who had wilfully despised and obstinately rejected that which had a much greater confirmation, than the discourse of a man risen from the dead, and was appointed by GOD for the ordinary and standing means of bringing men to repentance. So that our SAVIOUR might with reason enough pronounce that Tyre and Sidon, who never had a standing revelation of GOD to bring them to repentance, nor had rejected it, would upon miracles extraordinarily wrought among them, have repented ; and yet deny it elsewhere to be likely, that they who rejected a standing revelation of GOD, confirmed by miracles, which called them to repentance, would probably be brought to

to repentance by a particular miracle ; or that God should afford his grace to make it effectual for their repentance and salvation.

The words being thus cleared, I come now to raise such observations from them, as may be instructive and useful to us.

I. I observe from this discourse of our SAVIOUR, that miracles are of great force and efficacy to bring men to repentance.

This our SAVIOUR's discourse here supposeth ; otherwise their impenitence had not been so criminal and inexcusable upon that account, " that such " mighty works had been done among them," as would probably have prevailed upon some of the worst people that had been in the world ; for such were the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, guilty of great covetousness and fraud, pride and luxury, the usual sins of places of great traffick and commerce : and such to be sure was Sodom ; and yet our SAVIOUR tells us, that the miracles which he had wrought in the cities of Israel, would in all probability have brought those great sinners to repentance ; namely, by bringing them to faith, and convincing them of the truth and divinity of that doctrine which he preached unto them, and which contains such powerful arguments to repentance and amendment of life.

II. I observe likewise from our SAVIOUR's discourse, that God is not always obliged to work miracles for the conversion of sinners. It is great goodness in him to afford sufficient means of repentance to men, as he did to Tyre and Sidon, in calling them to repentance by his prophet ; though such miracles were not wrought among them, as God thought fit to accompany our SAVIOUR's preaching withal.

This I observe, to prevent a kind of bold and saucy objection, which some would perhaps be apt to make; if Tyre and Sidon would have repented, had such miracles been wrought among them, as our SAVIOUR wrought in Chorazin and Bethsaida, why were they not wrought, that they might have repented? To which it is sufficient answer to say, that GOD is not obliged to do all that is possible to be done, to reclaim men from their sins; he is not obliged to overpower their wills, and to work irresistibly upon their minds, which he can easily do; he is not obliged to work miracles for every particular man's conviction; nor where he vouchsafeth to do this, is he obliged always to work the greatest and most convincing miracles; his goodness will not suffer him to omit what is necessary and sufficient to bring men to repentance and happiness, nay beyond this he many times does more; but it is sufficient to vindicate the justice and goodness of GOD, that he is not wanting to us, in affording the means necessary to reclaim us from our sins, and to bring us to goodness. That which is properly our part, is to make use of those means which GOD affords us to become better, and not to prescribe to him how much he should do for us; to be thankful that he hath done so much, and not to find fault with him for having done no more.

III. I observe farther from our SAVIOUR's discourse, that the external means of repentance which GOD affords to men, do suppose an inward grace of GOD accompanying them, sufficiently enabling men to repent, if it be not their own fault; I say a sufficient grace of GOD accompanying the outward means of repentance, till by our wilful and obstinate neglect and resistance and opposition of this grace, we provoke GOD to withdraw it from the means, or
else

else to withdraw both the grace and the means from us; otherwise impenitence after such external means afforded, would be no new and special fault. For if the concurrence of God's grace with the outward means be necessary to work repentance, then the impenitence of those to whom this grace is not afforded, which yet is necessary to repentance, is neither any new sin, nor any new aggravation of their former impenitence. For no man can imagine that the just God will charge men with new guilt, and increase their condemnation, for remaining impenitent in such circumstances in which it is impossible for them to repent.

IV. I observe from this discourse of our SAVIOUR's, that an irresistible degree of grace is not necessary to repentance, nor commonly afforded to those who do repent. God may where he pleaseth, without injury to any man, over-power his will, and stop him in his course, and hinder him from making himself miserable, and by an irresistible right convince him of his error and the evil of his ways, and bring him to a better mind: But this God seldom does; and when he does it, it is very probable it is not so much for their own sakes, as to make them instruments of good to others. Thus by a secret but overpowering influence he over-ruled the disciples to follow our SAVIOUR, and to leave their calling and relations, and all their temporal concerns to do it. But one of the most remarkable examples of this extraordinary grace of God, is St. Paul, who was violently stopt in his course of persecuting the Christians, and convinced of his sin, and brought over to christianity, in a very extraordinary and forcible manner. And of this miraculous and extraordinary conversion, God himself gives this account, "that he
" was a chosen vessel unto him, to bear his name
" before

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“ before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel,” Acts. ix. 15. And St. Paul tells us, Gal. i. 15, 16. “ That for this end God had separated him from his mother’s womb, and called him by his grace, and revealed his Son to him” in that extraordinary manner, “ that he might preach him among the heathen.”

But generally God does not bring men thus to repentance ; nor is it necessary he should. For if an irresistible degree of grace were always necessary to bring men to repentance, there could be no difference between the impenitence of Chorazin and Bethsaida, and of Tyre and Sidon. For according to this doctrine of the necessity of irresistible grace to the conversion of every man, it is evident, that Tyre and Sidon neither could, nor would have repented, without an irresistible degree of God’s grace, accompanying the outward means of repentance which he afforded to them ; because such a degree of grace is necessary to repentance, and without it, it is impossible for any man to repent. But then it is as plain on the contrary, that if Chorazin and Bethsaida had had the same irresistible degree of God’s grace, together with the outward means of repentance afforded to them, that they would have repented as certainly as Tyre and Sidon. Where then is the reason of upbraiding the impenitence of the one, more than of the other ? Where the aggravation of the one’s guilt above the other ? Where the justice of punishing the impenitence of Chorazin and Bethsaida, more than theirs of Tyre and Sidon ? For upon this supposition, they must either have repented both alike, or have been both equally impenitent. The sum of what I have said, is this, that if no man does, nor can repent, without such a degree of God’s grace as cannot

cannot be resisted, no man's repentance is commendable, nor is one man's impenitence more blameable than another's ; Chorazin and Bethsaida can be in no more fault for continuing impenitent, than Tyre and Sidon were. For either this irresistible grace is afforded to men or not : if it be, their repentance is necessary, and they cannot help it ; if it be not, their repentance is impossible, and consequently their impenitence is necessary, and they cannot help it neither.

V. I observe from the main scope of our SAVIOUR's discourse, that the sins and impenitence of men receive their aggravation, and consequently shall have their punishment proportionable to the opportunities and means of repentance, which those persons have enjoyed and neglected.

For what is here said of miracles, is by equality of reason likewise true of all other advantages and means of repentance and salvation. The reason why miracles will be such an aggravation of the condemnation of men is, because they are so proper and powerful a means to convince them of the truth and divinity of that doctrine which calls them to repentance. So that all those means which God affords to us of the knowledge of our duty, of conviction of the evil and danger of a sinful course, are so many helps and motives to repentance, and consequently will prove so many aggravations of our sin and punishment, if we continue impenitent. The

VI. and last observation, and which naturally follows from the former, is this, that the case of those who are impenitent under the gospel, is of all others the most dangerous, and their damnation shall be heaviest and most severe.

And this brings the case of these cities here in the text home to ourselves. For in truth there is no material

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terial difference between the case of Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum, and of ourselves in this city and nation, who enjoy the clear light of the gospel, with all the freedom, and all the advantages that any people ever did. The mercies of God to this nation have been very great, especially in bringing us out of that darkness and superstition, which covered this western part of the world; in rescuing us from that great corruption and degeneracy of the christian religion which prevailed among us, by so early and so regular a reformation; and in continuing so long this great blessing to us. The judgments of God have been likewise very great upon us for our sins: "God hath manifested himself by "terrible things in righteousness;" our eyes have seen many and dismal calamities in the space of a few years, which call loudly upon us to repent and turn to God. God hath afforded us the most effectual means of repentance, and hath taken the most effectual course of bringing us to it. And though our blessed SAVIOUR do not speak to us in person, nor do we at this day see miracles wrought among us, as the Jews did; yet we have the doctrine which our blessed SAVIOUR preached, faithfully transmitted to us, and a credible relation of the miracles wrought for the confirmation of that doctrine, and many other arguments to persuade us of the truth of it, which those to whom our SAVIOUR spake had not, nor could not then have, taken from the accomplishing of our SAVIOUR's predictions, after his death; the speedy propagation and wonderful success of this doctrine in the world, by weak and inconsiderable means, against all the power and opposition of the world; the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jewish nation, according to our SAVIOUR's prophecy;

phesy ; besides many more that might be mentioned. And which is a mighty advantage to us, we are free from those prejudices against the person of our SAVIOUR and his doctrine, which the Jews, by the reverence which they bare to their rulers and teachers, were generally possess'd withal ; we are brought up in the belief of it, and have drunk it in by education ; and if we believe it, as we all profess to do, we have all the obligation and all the arguments to repentance, which the Jews could possibly have from the miracles which they saw ; for they were means of repentance to them no otherwise than as they brought them to the belief of our SAVIOUR's doctrine, which called them to repentance.

So that if we continue impenitent, the same woe is denounced against us that is against Chorazin and Bethsaida ; and we may be said with Capernaum, " to be lifted up to heaven," by the enjoyment of the most excellent means and advantages of salvation, that any people ever did, which if we neglect, and still continue wicked and impenitent under them, we may justly fear, that with them " we shall be thrown " down to hell," and have our place in the lowest part of that dismal dungeon, and in the very center of that fiery furnace.

Never was there greater cause to upbraid the impenitence of any people, than of us, considering the means and opportunities which we enjoy ; and never had any greater reason to fear a severer doom, than we have. Impenitence in a heathen is a great sin ; else how should God judge the world ? But God takes no notice of that, in comparison of the impenitence of Christians, who enjoy the gospel, and are convinced of the truth, and upon the greatest reason in the world profess to believe it. We Christians

have all the obligations to repentance, that reason and revelation, nature and grace can lay upon us. Art thou convinced that thou hast sinned, and done that which is contrary to thy duty, and thereby provoked the wrath of God, and incensed his justice against thee? As thou art a man, and upon the stock of natural principles, thou art obliged to repentance. The same light of reason which discovers to thee the errors of thy life, and challengeth thee for thy impiety and intemperance, for thy injustice and oppression, for thy pride and passion; the same natural conscience which accuseth thee of any miscarriages, does oblige thee to be sorry for them, "to turn from thy evil ways, and to break off thy sins by repentance." For nothing can be more unreasonable, than for a man to know a fault, and yet not think himself bound to be sorry for it; to be convinced of the evil of his ways, and not to think himself obliged by that very conviction, to turn from it and forsake it. If there be any such thing as a natural "law written in mens hearts," which the apostle tells us the heathens had, it is impossible to imagine, but that the law, which obligeth men not to transgress, should oblige them to repentance in case of transgression. And this every man in the world is bound to, though he had never seen the bible, nor heard of the name of CHRIST. And the revelation of the gospel doth not supersede this obligation, but adds new strength and force to it: and by how much this duty of repentance is more clearly revealed by our blessed SAVIOUR in the gospel; by how much the arguments which the gospel useth to persuade men, and encourage them to repentance, are greater and more powerful; by so much is the impenitence of those who live under the gospel the more inexcusable.

Had

Had we only some faint hopes of God's mercy, a doubtful opinion and weak persuasion of the rewards and punishments of another world; yet we have a law within us, which upon the probability of these considerations would oblige us to repentance. Indeed if men were assured upon good grounds, that there would be no future rewards and punishments; then the sanction of the law were gone, and it would lose it's force and obligation: or if we did despair of the mercy of God, and had good reason to think repentance impossible, or that it would do us no good; in that case there would be no sufficient motive and argument to repentance: for no man can return to his duty, without returning to the love of God and goodness; and no man can return to the love of God, who believes that he bears an implacable hatred against him, and is resolved to make him miserable for ever. During this persuasion no man can repent. And this seems to be the reason, why the devils continue impenitent.

But the heathens were not without hopes of God's mercy, and upon those small hopes which they had, they encouraged themselves into repentance; as you may see in the instance of the Ninevites, "Let them turn every one from his evil ways, and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Jonah iii. 8, 9. But if we, who have the clearest discoveries, and the highest assurance of this, who profess to believe that God hath declared himself placable to all mankind, that "he is in CHRIST reconciling the world to himself," and that upon our repentance "he will not impute our sins to us;" if we, to whom the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against

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“ all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,” and to whom “ life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel ;” if after all this, we still go on in an impenitent course, what shall we be able to plead in excuse of ourselves at that great day ? “ The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment” against such an impenitent generation, and condemn it ; because they repented upon the terror of lighter threatenings, and upon the encouragement of weaker hopes.

And therefore it concerns us, who call ourselves Christians, and enjoy the clear revelation of the gospel, to look about us, and take heed how we continue in an evil course. For if we remain impenitent, after all the arguments which the gospel, super-added to the light of nature, affords to us, to bring us to repentance, it shall not only “ be more tolerable for “ the men of Nineveh, but for Tyre and Sidon, for “ Sodom and Gomorrah,” the most wicked and impenitent heathens, “ at the day of judgment, “ than for us.” For because we have stronger arguments, and more powerful encouragements to repentance, than they had, if we do not repent, we shall meet with a heavier doom, and a fiercer damnation. The heathen world had many excuses to plead for themselves, which we have not. “ The “ times of that ignorance God winked at : but now “ commands all men every where to repent ; because “ he hath appointed a day, in the which he will “ judge the world in righteousness, by that man “ whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given “ assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him “ from the dead.”

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Of the immortality of the soul, as discovered by nature, and by revelation.

2 TIM. i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.

TH E design of the apostle in these two epistles to Timothy, is to direct him how he ought to demean himself, in the office which he bore in the church ; which he does in the first epistle : and to encourage him in his work ; which he does here in the second : in which, after his usual salutation, he endeavours to arm him against the fear of those persecutions, and the shame of those reproaches, which would probably attend him in the work of the Gospel, ver. 8. “ Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our LORD, nor of me his prisoner ; but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel, according to the power of God, who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling ;” as if he had said, the God whom thou serveest in this employment, and by whose power thou art strengthened, is he that “ hath saved and called us with an holy calling,” that is, it is he who by JESUS CHRIST hath brought salvation to us, and called us to this holy profession ; “ not according to our works,” that is, not that we by any thing that we have done, have deserved this at his

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sermon on
this text.

his hand, but “according to his own purpose and “grace,” that is, according to his own gracious purpose, “which was given us in CHRIST before the “world began,” that is, which from all eternity he decreed and determined to accomplish by JESUS CHRIST; “but is now made manifest by the appearing of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST;” that is, which gracious purpose of his is now clearly discovered by our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST’s coming into the world, “who hath abolished death, and hath brought “life and immortality to light, through the gospel.”

Which words express to us two happy effects of CHRIST’s appearance: first, “the abolishing of “death;” and, secondly, “the bringing of life and “immortality to light.” In the handling of these words, I shall,

First, Open to you the meaning of the several expressions in the text.

Secondly, Shew what our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST did towards “the abolishing of death, and “bringing to light life and immortality.”

For the first, I shall shew,

I. What is here meant by “the appearing of “JESUS CHRIST.”

II. What by the “abolishing of death.”

III. What by “bringing to light life and immortality.”

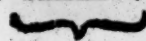
I. What is here meant by “the appearing of our “SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.” The scripture useth several phrases to express this thing to us. As it was the gracious design of GOD the Father, so it is called the giving of his Son, or sending him into the world. John iii. 16. “GOD so loved the world, “that he gave his only begotten Son.” Gal. iv. 4. “In the fulness of time GOD sent his Son.” As it

was the voluntary undertaking of God the Son, so it is called his coming into the world. In relation to his incarnation, whereby he was made visible to us in his body, and likewise in reference to the obscure promises, and prophecies, and types of the old testament, it is called his manifestation or appearance. So the apostle expresseth it, 1 John iii.

5. "Ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins;" by which we are to understand primarily his incarnation, his appearing in our nature, whereby he became visible to us. As he was God, he could not appear to us, dwelling in light and glory, not to be approached by us in this state of mortality, and therefore he clothed himself in flesh, that he might appear and become manifest to us.

I say, by his appearing we are primarily to understand his incarnation: yet not only that, but likewise all that was consequent upon this, the actions of his life, and his death and resurrection; because all these concur to the producing of these happy effects mentioned in the text.

II. What is meant by the abolishing of death. By this we are not to understand, that CHRIST by his appearance hath rooted death out of the world, so that men are no longer subject to it. For we see that even good men, and those who are partakers of the benefits of CHRIST's death, are still subject to the common law of mortality: but this expression of CHRIST's having abolished death, signifies the conquest and victory which CHRIST hath gained over death in his own person, in that after he was dead, and laid in his grave, he rose again from the dead, he freed himself from the bands of death, and broke loose from the fetters of it, they not being able to hold him, as the expression is, Acts ii. 24. and consequently

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quently hath, by this victory over it, given us an assurance of a resurrection to a better life. For since CHRIST hath abolished death, and triumphed over it, and thereby over the powers of darkness: (for so the apostle tells us, that by his death, and that which followed it, his resurrection from the dead, "he hath destroyed him that had the power of death: that is, the devil." The devil, he contributed all he could to the death of CHRIST, by tempting Judas to betray him, and engaging all his instruments in the procuring of it; as he had before brought in death into the world, by tempting the first man to sin, upon which death ensued; thus far he prevailed, and thought his kingdom was safe, having procured the death of him who was so great an enemy to it: but CHRIST, by rising from the dead, defeats the devil of his design, and plainly conquers him, who had arrogated to himself the power of death;) I say, since CHRIST hath thus vanquished death, and triumphed over it, and him that had the power of it, death hath lost it's dominion, and CHRIST hath taken the whole power and disposal of it; as you find, Rev. i. 18. "I am "he that liveth and was dead, and behold I am "alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and "of death." Now CHRIST hath not only thus conquered death for himself, but likewise for all those who believe on him; so that death shall not be able to keep them for ever under it's power: but CHRIST, by the same power whereby he raised up himself from the dead, will also "quicken our mortal bodies," and raise them up to a new life; for he keeps "the "keys of hell and death;" and as a reward of his sufferings and submission to death, he hath power conferred upon him, "to give eternal life to as many as "he

“ he pleases.” In this sense, death, though it be not quite chased out of the world, yet it is virtually and in effect “ abolished by the appearance of JESUS CHRIST,” having in a great measure lost it’s power and dominion ; and since CHRIST hath assured us of a final rescue from it, the power of it is rendered insignificant and inconsiderable, and the sting and terror of it is taken away. So the apostle tells us in the forementioned place, Heb. ii. 14, 15. that CHRIST having “ by death destroyed him who had the “ power of death, that is, the devil, he hath delivered those who through fear of death, were all “ their life-time subject to bondage.” And not only the power and terror of death is for the present in a great measure taken away ; but it shall at last be utterly destroyed. So the apostle tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 26. “ The last enemy that shall be destroyed is “ death ;” which makes the apostle, in the latter end of this chapter, to break forth into that triumph, ver. 54, 55. “ So when this corruptible shall have “ put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have “ put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass “ the saying that is written, death is swallowed up in “ victory. O death, where is thy sting ? O grave, “ where is thy victory ?”

III. What is here meant by “ bringing life and “ immortality to light.” Life and immortality, is here by a frequent Hebraism put for immortal life ; as also immediately before the text, you find purpose and grace, put for God’s gracious purpose. The phrase of bringing to light, is spoken of things which were before either wholly or in a great measure hid, either were not at all discovered before, or not so clearly. Now because the heathens by the light of nature, had some probable conjectures and hopes con-

cerning another life after this, they were in some measure persuaded, that when men died, they were not wholly extinguished, but did pass into another world, and did there receive rewards suited to their carriage and demeanour in this life ; and because the Jews also, before CHRIST, had these natural suggestions and hopes strengthened and confirmed by revelations, which GOD made unto them under the old testament, therefore we cannot understand this phrase of CHRIST's, "bringing immortal life to light" absolutely, as if it were wholly a new discovery, which the world had no apprehension of before ; but only comparatively, as a thing which was now rendered, by the coming of CHRIST into the world, incomparably more evident and manifest. *Quicquid enim philosophi, quicquid rabbini eâ de re dicunt, tenebræ sunt, si ad evangelii lucem comparentur ;* " whatever the philosophers, whatever the rabbins say of this matter, is but darkness, compared to the clear light and revelation of the gospel." I proceed to the

Second thing I proposed, viz. to shew what CHRIST's coming into the world hath done towards " the abolishing of death," and " bringing of life and immortality to light." I shall speak distinctly to these two.

I. What CHRIST's appearance and coming into the world hath done towards " the abolishing of death," or how " death is abolished by the appearance of CHRIST." I have already shewn in the explication, that this phrase, " the abolishing of death," signifies the conquest which he made over death in his own person for himself ; the fruit of which victory redounds to us. For in that CHRIST by his divine power did conquer it, and set himself

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free from the bands of it, this shews that the power of it is now brought into other hands, that "CHRIST hath the keys of hell and death;" so that though the devil, by tempting to sin, brought death into the world, yet it shall not be in his power to keep men always under the power of it; and hereby the terror of this great enemy is in a good measure taken away, and he shall at last be totally destroyed, by the same hand that hath already given him his mortal wound.

Now this is said to be done by "the appearing of JESUS CHRIST," for as much as by his coming into the world, and taking our nature upon him, he became capable of encountering this enemy and overcoming him, in such a manner as might give us assurance of a final victory over it, and for the present comfort and encourage us against the fears of it. For,

1. By taking our nature upon him, he became subject to the frailties and miseries of mortality, and liable to the suffering of death, by which expiation of sin was made. Sin was the cause of death. So the apostle tells us, "by man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so that death came upon all." Now the way to cure this malady which was come upon our nature, and to remove this great mischief which was come into the world, is by taking away the meritorious cause of it, which is the guilt of sin. Now this CHRIST hath taken away by his death. CHRIST, that he might abolish death, hath appeared for "the abolition of sin." So the apostle tells us, Heb. ix. 26, 27, 28. "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, *εἰς ἀθέτησιν ἀμαρτίας*, for the abolishing of sin:" and to shew that this was intended as a remedy of the great mischief and in-

convenience of mortality, which sin had brought upon mankind, the apostle immediately adds in the next verse, that “as it is appointed unto all men “once to die, so CHRIST was once offered to bear “the sins of many:” and by this means the sting of death is taken away, and death in effect conquered; the consideration of which makes the apostle break out into that thankful triumph, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56, 57. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, “where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin: “But thanks be to GOD, which giveth us the victory through our LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

2. As CHRIST by taking our nature upon him became capable of suffering death, and thereby making expiation for sin; so by dying he became capable of rising again from the dead, whereby he hath gained a perfect victory and conquest over death and the powers of darkness. And this account the apostle gives us of CHRIST’s taking our nature upon him, as being one of the principal ends and designs of it, Heb. ii. 14, 15, 16. “For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself “likewise took part of the same, that through death “he might destroy him that had the power of death, “that is, the devil;” that is, that by taking our nature upon him, he might be capable of encountering this enemy, that is, of encountering death in his own territories, and beating him in his own quarters; and by rising out of his grave, he might give us full and comfortable assurance of the possibility of being rescued from the power of the grave, and recovered out of the jaws of death. And therefore the wisdom of GOD pitched upon this way, as that which was most fit and proper to encourage and bear us up against the terrors of the enemy; and by giving us
a lively

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a lively instance and example of a victory over death, achieved by one clothed with mortality like ourselves, "we might have strong consolation and good hope through grace," and might be fully assured that he who had conquered this enemy for himself, was able also to conquer him for us, and to deliver us from the grave. Therefore the apostle reasons from the fitness and suitableness of this dispensation, as if no other argument could have been so proper to arm us against the fears of death, and to satisfy us that we should not always be held under the power of it; "for as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, and deliver them who through fear of death," &c. The force of which argument is this, that seeing men are of a mortal nature (for that he means by "being partakers of flesh and blood") nothing can be a greater comfort to us against the fears of death, than to see death conquered by flesh and blood, by one of the same nature with ourselves. Therefore the apostle adds, ver. 16. "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but the seed of Abraham." If he had assumed the angelical nature, which is immortal, this would not have been so sensible a conviction to us of the possibility of it, as to have a lively instance and example presented us, of one in our nature conquering death, and triumphing over the grave. I proceed to the

II. thing, What CHRIST hath done towards "the bringing of life and immortality to light." And because I told you that this is comparatively spoken, and signifies to us a greater degree of evidence, and a firmer assurance given us by the christian religion, than

than the world had before, therefore it will be requisite to inquire into these two things.

First, What assurance men had or might have had of the immortality of the soul, and a future state, before the coming of CHRIST into the world, and the revelation of the gospel.

Secondly, What greater evidence, and what higher degree of assurance the gospel now gives us of immortal life; what greater arguments this new revelation and discovery of God to the world doth furnish us withal, to persuade us of this matter, than the world was acquainted withal before.

First, What assurance men had or might have had of the immortality of the soul, and consequently of a future state, before the revelation of the gospel by CHRIST's coming into the world. And here are two things distinctly to be considered.

First, What arguments natural reason doth furnish us withal, to persuade us of this principle, that our souls are immortal, and that there is another state remains for men after this life.

Secondly, What assurance *de facto* the world had of this principle, before CHRIST's coming into the world: what the heathens, and what the Jews had. The reason why I shall speak to these distinctly, is, because they are two very different inquiries; what assurance men might have had from the principles of natural reason concerning this matter, and what assurance they had *de facto*. I begin with the

First, What arguments natural reason doth furnish us withal to persuade us to this principle, that our souls are immortal, and consequently that another state remains for men after this life. And here I shall shew,

I. How much may be said for it.

II. How

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II. How little can be said against it. But before I come to speak particularly to the arguments, which natural reason affords us for the proof of this principle, I shall premise certain general considerations, which may give light and force to the following arguments. As,

First, By the soul we mean a part of man distinct from his body, or a principle in him which is not matter. I chuse rather to describe it this way, than by the essential properties of it, which are hard to fix upon, and are more remote from common apprehension. Our SAVIOUR, when he would convince his disciples after his resurrection, that the body wherein he appeared to them was a real body, and that he was not a spirit or apparition, he bids them "touch and handle him; for, says he, a spirit hath "not flesh and bones, as ye see me to have." So that by the soul or spirit of a man, we mean some principle in man, which is really distinct from his visible and sensible part, from all that in man which affects our outward senses, and which is not to be described by any sensible and external qualities, such as we use to describe a body by: because it is supposed to be of such a nature, as does not fall under the cognizance and notice of any of our senses. And therefore I describe it, by removing from it all those qualities and properties which belong to that which falls under our senses, viz. that it is something in man distinct from his body, a principle in him which is not matter; that principle which is the cause of those several operations, which by inward sense and experience we are conscious to ourselves of; such are perception, understanding, memory, will. So that the most plain and popular notion that we can have of the soul, is, that it is something in us which we never

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never saw, and which is the cause of those effects which we find in ourselves; it is the principle whereby we are conscious to ourselves, that we perceive such and such objects, that we see, or hear, or perceive any thing by any other sense; it is that whereby we think and remember, whereby we reason about any thing, and do freely chuse and refuse such things as are presented to us. These operations every one is conscious to himself of, and that which is the principle of these, or the cause from whence these proceed, is that which we mean by the soul.

Secondly, By the immortality of the soul, I mean nothing else, but that it survives the body, that when the body dies and falls to the ground, yet this principle which we call the soul, still remains and lives separate from it; that is, there is still a part of us which is free from the fate of the body, and continues to perform all those operations, to the performance of which the organs of the body are not necessary; that is, when our bodies are destitute of life, and become a dead carcase, there is still something that did belong to us, which retains the power of understanding, which thinks, and reasons, and remembers, and does all these freely.

Thirdly, That he that goes about to prove the soul's immortality, supposeth the existence of a Deity, that there is a God. For although there be a very intimate and strict connexion between these two principles as to us, as being the two great pillars of all religion; yet that which is first and most fundamental to all religion, is the existence of a God; which if it be not first proved, the best arguments for the soul's immortality lose their force. Therefore as to the present argument, I suppose the being of God as a thing acknowledged, and not now to be proved;
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which I may the better do, having formerly endeavoured to make good this grand principle of religion, against the pretensions of the Atheists.

Fourthly, The existence of a God being supposed, this doth very much facilitate the other, of the soul's immortality. For this being an essential property of the divine nature, that he is a spirit, that is, something that is not matter; it being once granted that God is, thus much is gained, that there is such a thing as a spirit, as an immaterial substance, that is not liable to die or perish: so that he that goes about to prove the immortality of the soul, shall not need to prove that there may be such a thing as a spirit, that the notion of an immaterial substance does not imply a contradiction, because, supposing that there is a God, who is essentially a spirit, there can be no doubt of the possibility of such a thing as a spirit; and though there be this difference between God and all other spirits, that he is an infinite spirit, whereas others are but finite; yet no man, that grants the existence of an infinite spirit, can with any pretence or colour of reason deny the possibility of a finite spirit.

Fifthly, and lastly, it is highly reasonable that men should acquiesce and rest satisfied in such reasons and arguments for the proof of any thing, as the nature of the thing to be proved will bear; because there are several kinds and degrees of evidence, which all things are not equally capable of. It is sufficient that the evidence be such as the nature of the thing to be proved will admit of, and such as prudent men make no scruple to admit for sufficient evidence for things of the like nature, and such as, supposing the thing to be, we cannot ordinarily expect better or greater evidence for it.

There are two kinds of evidences, which are the
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highest and most satisfactory that this world affords to us, and those are the evidence of sense, and mathematical demonstration. Now there are many things, concerning which the generality of men profess themselves to be well satisfied, which do not afford either of these kinds of evidence. There's none of us but doth firmly believe that we were born, though we do not remember any such thing; no man's memory does furnish him with the testimony of his senses from this matter, nor can any man prove this by a mathematical demonstration, nor by any necessary argument, so as to shew it impossible that the thing should be otherwise. For it is possible that a man may come into the world otherwise, than by the ordinary course of generation, as the first man did, who was created immediately by God; and yet I know no man in the world who doubts in the least concerning this matter, though he hath no other argument for it, but the testimony of others, and his own observation, how other persons like himself came into the world. And it is reasonable to acquiesce in this evidence, because the nature of the thing affords no greater. We who never were at Jerusalem, do firmly believe that there is such a place, upon the testimony and relation of others: and no man is blamed for this, as being over-credulous; because no man, that will not take the pains to go thither, can have any other greater evidence of it, than the general testimony of those who say they have seen it. And indeed almost all human affairs, I am sure the most important, are governed and conducted by such evidence, as falls very much short both of the evidence of sense, and of mathematical demonstration.

To apply this then to my present purpose. That
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the soul of man is of an immortal nature, is not capable of all kinds and degrees of evidence. It cannot be proved by our senses, nor is it reasonable to expect it should be so proved; because the soul is supposed, by every one that discourseth of it, to be a thing of such a nature, as cannot be seen or handled, or fall under any other of our senses: nor can it be proved to us by our own experience, while we are in this world; because whoever dies, which is the only trial that can be made whether our souls remain after our bodies, goes out of this world. As for mathematical demonstration, the nature of the thing renders it incapable of it. It remains then that we rest contented with such arguments as the nature of the thing will bear, and with such evidence as men are contented to accept of, and do account sufficient, in other matters; such evidence as a prudent considering man, who is not credulous on the one hand, and on the other is not prejudiced by any interest against it, would rest satisfied in.

Having premised these general considerations, to clear my way, I now come to speak to the particular arguments, whereby the immortality of the soul may be made out to our reason. And the best way to estimate the force of the arguments which I shall bring for it, will be to consider before-hand with ourselves, what evidence we can in reason expect for a thing of this nature. Suppose our souls be immortal; by what kind of arguments could we desire to be assured of it? Setting aside miracles and divine revelation, could we desire more than this?

I. That the thing be a natural notion and dictate of our minds.

II. That it doth not contradict any other principle that nature hath planted in us, but does very well

well accord and agree with all other the most natural
notion our minds.

III. That it be suitable to our natural fears and hopes.

IV. That it tends to the happiness of man, and the good order and government of the world.

V. That it gives the most rational account of all those inward actions, which we are conscious to ourselves of, as perception, understanding, memory, will, which we cannot without great unreasonableness ascribe to matter, as the cause of them. If all these be thus, as I shall endeavour to make it appear they are, what greater satisfaction could we desire to have of the immortality of our souls, than these arguments give us? I do not say that any one of these arguments doth sufficiently conclude this thing; nor is it necessary, that taken singly and by themselves they should do it; it is sufficient that they concur to make up one entire argument, which may be a sufficient evidence of the soul's immortality. To illustrate this by an instance. Suppose a man should use these two arguments, to prove that such a man deserves to be credited in such a relation. First, because he had sufficient knowledge of the thing he relates; and, secondly, because he is a man of integrity and fidelity. Neither of these alone would prove the man to be worthy of credit; though both together make up a good argument. So it is in these arguments which I have produced; it may be, no one of them is a sufficient inducement, taken singly and by itself, to satisfy a man fully that the soul is immortal; and yet they may concur together to make a very powerful argument. I begin with the

I. That our souls are of an immortal nature, that they do not die and perish with our bodies, but pass into another state upon the dissolution of our bodies,

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is a natural notion and dictate of our minds. That I call a natural notion, which the minds of all men do naturally hit upon and agree in, notwithstanding the distance and remoteness of the several parts of the world from one another, notwithstanding the different tempers, and manner and ways of education. The only way to measure whether any thing be natural or not, is by inquiring whether it agree to the whole kind or not: if it do, then we call it natural. *Omnium consensus naturæ vox est*, "The consent of all is the voice of nature," says Tully, speaking of the universal agreement of all nations in this apprehension, that "the souls of men remain after their bodies." And this he tells us he looks upon as a very great argument, *Maximum verè argumentum est, naturam ipsam de immortalitate animarum tacitam judicare, quod omnibus curæ sint & maxime quidem quæ post mortem futura sunt*: "this is a very great argument that nature doth secretly, and in mens silent thoughts determine the immortality of the soul, that all men are solicitous of what shall become of them after death." *Nescio quomodo inhaeret in mentibus quasi seculorum quoddam augurium futurorum, idque in maximis ingeniis altissimisque animis & existit maxime & apparet facillime*: "I know not how (saith he) there sticks in the mind a certain kind of presage of a future state, and this is most deeply fixed and discovers itself soonest in the choicest spirits." Again the same author, *Ut Deos esse naturâ opinamur sic permanere animos arbitramur consensu nationum omnium*: "As this opinion is planted in us by nature, that there is a God, so by the consent of all nations we believe that souls remain after the body." I might multiply testimonies to this purpose out of the ancient heathen writers;

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writers ; but these which I have produced out of this great author, are so plain and express, that I need bring no other.

As for those barbarous nations which have been discovered in these latter ages of the world, and which before the first planting of America, were never known to have held correspondence with these parts of the world, yet all those nations agree in this principle, of the immortality of the soul ; nay even the most barbarous of those nations, those who are most inhuman and eat one another, those of Joupinamboult in Brasile, who are said by some authors, but I think not upon sufficient grounds, not to acknowledge the being of a God ; yet even these (as Lerius tells us, who lived among them) had a very fixed and firm persuasion of this principle of religion, the immortality of the soul. “ There is
 “ not, says he, any nation in the world more remote
 “ from all religion than these were ; yet to shew that
 “ there is some light in the midst of this darkness,
 “ I can, says he, truly affirm, that they have not
 “ only some apprehensions of the immortality of
 “ the soul, but a most confident persuasion of it.
 “ Their opinion, says he, is that the souls of stout
 “ and valiant men after death fly beyond the highest
 “ mountains, and there are gathered to their fathers
 “ and grand-fathers, and live in pleasant gardens,
 “ with all manner of delights ; but the souls of
 “ slothful and unactive men, and those who do no-
 “ thing for their country, are carried to Aygman
 “ (so they call the devil) and live with him in perpe-
 “ tual torments.” The like Xaverius and others, who laboured in the conversion of the remote parts of the East-Indies, tell us concerning those nations, that they found them generally possessed with this principle, of the soul’s immortality.

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Now what will we call a natural notion, if not that which mankind in all places of the world, in all ages, so far as history informs, did universally agree in? What evidence greater than this can any man give, to shew that any thing is natural? And if we believe a God, (which I told you I do all along in this argument suppose to be already proved) can we imagine that this wise and good God would plant such a notion and apprehension in the understandings of men, as would put an universal cheat and delusion upon human nature?

And that the universal consent of all nations in this principle, cannot be resolved either into the fears and groundless jealousy and superstition of human nature, nor into universal tradition, which had it's original from some impostor, nor into reason and policy of state, I might shew particularly: but having formerly done that, concerning the universal consent of all nations in the belief of a God, and the reason being the very same, as to this principle of the immortality of the soul, I shall not need to do this over again upon this argument.

And that some persons, and particular sects in the world, have disowned this principle, is no sufficient objection against it. It cannot be denied, but the Epicureans among the philosophers, did renounce this principle; and some also among the Stoicks do speak doubtfully of it. The Sadducees likewise among the Jews fell into this error, upon a mistake and misapprehension of the doctrine of their master Sadoc, who, as Josephus tells us, did use to inculcate this principle to his scholars, that though there were no rewards nor punishments after this life, yet men ought to be good and live virtuously; from whence in process of time, by heat of opposition
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against the Pharisees, who brought in oral tradition, and made it equal with the written word of God, they fell into that error, and denied the soul's immortality, not finding such clear texts for it in the Old Testament, as to them did seem fully convincing of this truth. Xaverius likewise tells us, that among the several sects of religion which he found in Japan, there was one which denied the immortality of the soul, and that there were any spirits: but he says they were a sort of notoriously wicked and vicious persons.

To these instances, which are so few, and bear no proportion to the generality of mankind, I have these two things to say.

1. That no argument can be drawn, *à monstro ad naturam*. A thing may be natural, and yet some instances may be brought to the contrary: but these are but few in comparison, and like monsters, which are no argument against nature. No man will deny that it is natural for men to have two eyes, and five fingers upon a hand; though there are several instances of men born but with one eye, and with four or six fingers.

2. But especially in matters of religion and discourse, which are subject to liberty, men may offer violence to nature, and to gratify their lusts and interests, may by false reasonings debauch their understanding, and by long striving against the natural bent and bias of it, may alter their apprehensions of things, and persuade others to the same: but nothing that is against nature can prevail very far, but nature will still be endeavouring to recover itself, and to free itself from the violence which is offered to it. So that mens understandings left to themselves, and not having some false bias put upon them, out of a
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design of pride and singularity in opinion, which was the case of Epicurus; or out of the interest of some lust, and a design to set men at liberty to sin, which is the case of most who have renounced this principle; I say, nothing but one of these two can ordinarily make men deny the immortality of the soul. Thus I have done with the first argument, namely, that the immortality of the soul is a natural notion and dictate of our minds.

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Of the immortality of the soul, as discovered by nature, and by revelation.

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But is now made manifest by the appearing of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.

I Proceed to the second argument, that this notion or principle of the immortality of the soul doth not contradict any other principle that nature hath planted in us, but doth very well accord and agree with all those other notions which are most natural. I shall mention two, which seem to be the most natural notions that we have, and the most deeply rooted in our natures; the one is the existence and the perfections of God; and the other, the difference of good and evil. Mankind do universally agree in these two principles, that there is a God who is essentially

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essentially good and just; and that there is a real difference between good and evil, which is not founded in the opinion and imagination of persons, or in the custom and usage of the world, but in the nature of things. Now this principle of the immortality of the soul, and future rewards after this life, is so far from clashing with either of these principles, that the contrary assertion, viz. that our souls are mortal, and that there is nothing to be hoped for, or feared beyond this life, would very much contradict those other principles. To shew this then particularly,

I. The immortality of the soul is very agreeable to the natural notion which we have of God, one part whereof is, that he is essentially good and just.

(I.) For his goodness. It is very agreeable to that, to think that God would make some creatures for as long a duration as they are capable of. The wisdom of God hath chosen to display itself, in creating variety of things of different degrees and perfections; things devoid of life and sense; and several degrees and orders of sensitive creatures, of different shapes and figures, of different magnitude, some vastly great, others extremely little, others of a middle sort between these. And himself being a pure spirit, we have no reason to doubt, but he could make creatures of a spiritual nature, and such as should have no principle of self-corruption in them. And seeing he could make creatures of such perfection, if we believe him to be essentially good, we have no reason to doubt, but that he hath done so. For it is the very nature of goodness, to communicate and diffuse itself, and to delight in doing so; and we cannot imagine, but that the same goodness which prompted and inclined him to give being to those creatures which are of an inferior degree of perfection, would

move him likewise to make creatures more perfect, and capable of greater degrees of happiness, and of a longer enjoyment of it, if it were in his power to make such; and no man that believes the omnipotency of God can doubt of this. For he who by a pure act of his will can command things to be, and in an instant to start out of nothing, can as easily make one sort of creatures as another. Now the power of God being supposed, his goodness secures us of his will: for we cannot imagine any such thing as envy, in a being which we suppose to be perfectly good; nothing being more inconsistent with perfect goodness, than to be unwilling to communicate happiness to others, and to grudge that others should partake of it.

Now this being supposed, that God could and would make creatures of a spiritual and immortal nature, and the utmost imaginable perfections of such creatures being knowledge and liberty, wherever these perfections are found, we have reason to conclude that creature to be endowed with a principle that is of a spiritual and immortal nature. Now these perfections of understanding and will being found in man, this argues him to be endowed with such a principle, as is in it's own nature capable of an immortal duration.

It is true indeed, this spiritual part of man, which we call his soul, is united to a visible and material part, viz. his body; the union of which parts constitutes a peculiar sort of creature, which is *utriusque mundi nexus*, "unites the material and immaterial world, the world of matter and of spirits." And as it is very suitable to the wisdom of God, which delights in variety, that there should be a sort of creatures, compounded of both these principles, mat-

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ter and spirit; so it is very agreeable to his goodness to think that he would design such creatures for as long a duration and continuance as they were capable of. For as it is the effect of goodness to bring creatures forth into the possession of that life and happiness which they are capable of; so to continue them in the enjoyment of it for so long as they are capable.

The sum of all this is, that as it is agreeable to the wisdom of God, which made the world, to display itself in all variety of creatures; so it is agreeable to his goodness, to make some of as perfect a kind as creatures are capable of being. Now it being no repugnancy nor contradiction, that a creature should be of a spiritual and immortal nature, we have no reason to think, but that the fruitfulness of the divine goodness hath brought forth such creatures; and if there be reason to conclude any thing to be of a spiritual and immortal nature, certainly the principle of understanding and liberty, which we are conscious of in ourselves, deserves to be reputed such.

(2.) It is very agreeable to the justice of God, to think the souls of men remain after this life, that there may be a state of reward and recompence in another world. If we believe God to be holy and just, we cannot but believe that he loves righteousness and goodness, and hates iniquity; and that as he is governor and publick magistrate of the world, he is concerned to countenance and encourage the one, and to discountenance and discourage the other. Now the providences of God being in a great measure promiscuously administered in this world, so that no man can make any certain judgment of God's love and hatred towards persons, by what befalls them in this world, it being the lot of good men many times to suffer and be afflicted, and of wicked men to live in a flourishing

flourishing and prosperous condition ; I say, things being thus, it is very agreeable to these notions which we have of the divine holiness and justice, to believe that there will a time come, when this wise and just governor of the world will make a wide and visible difference between the righteous and the wicked ; so that though for a while the justice of God may be clouded, yet there will a time come when it shall be clearly manifested, and every eye see it and bear witness to it, when “ judgment shall break forth as “ the light, and righteousness as the noon-day.” It is possible that sin for a while may go unpunished, nay, triumph and prosper ; and that virtue and innocence may not only be unrewarded, but oppressed and despised, and persecuted. And this may be reconcilable enough to the wisdom of God’s providence, and the justice of it, supposing the immortality of the soul, and another state after this life, wherein all things shall be set strait, and every man shall receive according to his works : but unless this be supposed, it is impossible to solve the justice of God’s providence. Who will believe that the affairs of the world are administered by him who loves righteousness, and hates all the workers of iniquity, who will not let the least service that is done to him pass unrewarded, nor on the other hand acquit the guilty, and let sin go unpunished, which are the properties of justice ; I say, who will believe this, that looks into the course of the world, and sees with how little difference and distinction of good and bad, the affairs of it are managed ? That sees virtue discountenanced and despised, poor and destitute, afflicted and tormented ; when wickedness is many times exalted to high places, and makes a great noise and ruffle in the world ? He that considers what a hazard many times

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times good men run, how for goodness sake they venture, and many times quit all the contentments and enjoyments of this life, and submit to the greatest sufferings and calamities that human nature is capable of; while in the mean time prosperity is poured into the lap of the wicked, and heaven seems to look pleasantly upon those that deal treacherously, and to be silent whilst the wicked devours the man that is more righteous than himself; he that considers this, and can without supposing another life after this, pretend to vindicate the justice of these things, must be as blind as the fortune that governs them. Would not this be a perpetual stain and blemish upon the divine providence, that Abel, who offered up “ a better
“ sacrifice than Cain, and had this testimony, that
“ he pleased God,” yet after all this, should have no other reward for it, but to be slain by his brother, who had offended God by a slight and contemptuous offering? If there were no reward to be expected after this life, would not this have been a sad example to the world, to see one of the first men that served God acceptably, thus rewarded? What a pitiful encouragement would it be to men to be good, to see profane Esau blest “ with the dew of heaven, and
“ the fatness of the earth;” and to hear good old Jacob in the end and conclusion of his days, to complain, “ few and evil have the days of my pilgrimage
“ been?” If this had been the end of Esau and Jacob, it would puzzle all the wit and reason of mankind, to wipe off this reproach from the providence of God, and vindicate the justice of it. And therefore I do not wonder, that the greatest wits among the heathen philosophers, were so much puzzled with this objection against the providence of God; if the wise, and just, and good God do administer the af-

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fairs of the world, and be concerned in the good or bad actions of men, *cur bonis male & malis bene?* S E R M.
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“How comes it to pass, that good men many times are miserable, and bad men so happy in the world?” And they had no other way to wipe off this objection, but by referring these things to another world, wherein the temporal sufferings of good men should be eternally rewarded; and the short and transient happiness of wicked men should be rendered insignificant, and drowned in an eternity of misery.

So that if we believe the being of God, and the providence of God; (which I do all along take for granted in this argument) there is no other way imaginable to solve the equity and justice of God's providence, but upon this supposition, that there is another life after this. For to say, that virtue is a sufficient and abundant reward for itself, though it have some truth in it, if we set aside those sufferings and miseries and calamities, which virtue is frequently attended with in this life; yet if these be taken in, it is but a very jejune and dry speculation. For considering the strong propension and inclination of human nature to avoid these evils and inconveniencies, a state of virtue attended with great sufferings, would be so far from being a happiness, that it would be a real misery; so that the determination of the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 19. is according to nature, and the truth and reason of things, that, “if in this life only we had hope, we were of all men most miserable.” For although it be true, that as things now stand, and as the nature of man is framed, good men do find a strange kind of inward pleasure and secret satisfaction of mind in the discharge of their duty, and in doing what is virtuous; yet every man that looks into himself, and consults his own breast, will find that
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this delight and contentment springs chiefly from the hopes which men conceive, that a holy and virtuous life shall not be unrewarded: and without these hopes virtue is but a dead and empty name: and notwithstanding the reasonableness of virtuous actions compared with the contrary of them, yet when virtue came to be encumbered with difficulties, and to be attended with such sufferings and inconveniencies, as were grievous and intolerable to human nature, then it would appear unreasonable to chuse that for a happiness, which would rob a man of all the felicity of his life. For though a man were never so much in love with virtue, for the native beauty and comeliness of it; yet it would strangely cool his affection to it, to consider that he should be undone by the match, that when he had it he must go a begging with it, and be in danger of death, for the sake of that which he had chosen for the felicity of his life. So that how devout soever the woman might be, yet I dare say she was not over-wise and considerate, who going about with a pitcher of water in one hand, and a pan of coals in the other, and being asked what she intended to do with them, answered: "that she
"intended with the one to burn up heaven, and
"with the other to quench hell, that men might love
"God and virtue for their own sakes, without hope
"of reward, or fear of punishment."

And the consequence of this dry doctrine does sufficiently appear in the sect of the Sadducees, which had its rise from this principle of Sadoc, the master of the sect, who out of an indiscreet zeal to teach something above others, and indeed above the pitch of human nature, inculcated this doctrine upon his scholars, that religion and virtue ought to be loved for themselves, though there were no reward of virtue

to be hoped, nor punishment of vice to be feared in another world ; from which his disciples inferred, that it was not necessary to religion to believe a future state, and in process of time, peremptorily maintained that there was no life after this. For they did not only deny the resurrection of the body, but as St. Paul tells us, they said, that “ there was neither angel nor spirit ;” that is, they denied that there was any thing of an immortal nature, that did remain after this life. And what the consequence of this was, we may see in the character which Josephus gives of that sect ; for he tells us, that the commonalty of the Jews were of the sect of the Pharisees, but most of the great and rich men were Sadducees ; which plainly shews, that this dry speculation of loving religion and virtue for themselves, without any expectation of future rewards, did end in their giving over all serious pursuit of religion : and because they hoped for nothing after this life, therefore laying aside all other considerations, they applied themselves to the present business of this life, and grasped as much of the present enjoyment of its power and riches, as they could by any means attain to.

And for a farther evidence of this, that it is only or principally the hopes of a future happiness that bear men up in the pursuit of virtue, that give them so much comfort and satisfaction in the prosecution of it, and make men encounter the difficulties, and oppositions, and persecutions they meet withal in the ways of religion, with so much undauntedness and courage, I say, for the farther evidence of this, I shall only offer this consideration, that according to the degree of this hope and assurance of another life, mens constancy and courage in the ways of virtue and religion have been. Before CHRIST's coming

into the world, and “ the bringing of life and immortality to light by the gospel,” we do not find in all ages of the world, so many instances of patience and constant suffering for religion, as happened in the first age after CHRIST. GOD did not think fit to try the world so much in this kind, till they were furnished with a principle which would bear them up under the greatest sufferings, which was nothing else but the full assurance which the gospel gave the world of a blessed immortality after this life ; the firm belief and persuasion of which, made Christians dead to the world, and all the contentments and enjoyments of it, and by raising them above all the pleasures and terrors of sense, made them to despise present things, “ in hopes of eternal life, which “ GOD that could not lye had promised.” This was that which set them above the fears of death, so that they were not to be frightened out of their religion by the most exquisite torments, and all the most horrid and fearful shapes that the malice of men and devils could dress up misery and affliction in. Whereas under the old dispensation of the law, before the revelation of the gospel, when the promises of eternal life were not so clear, and mens hopes of it more weak and faint, the express encouragement to obedience was founded in the promises of temporal blessings ; GOD herein complying with the necessity of human nature, which is not to be wrought upon to any great purpose, but by arguments of advantage.

The sum of this argument, which I have thus largely dilated upon, because I look upon it as one of the most strong and convincing of the soul’s immortality, is this ; that the justice of GOD’s providence cannot sufficiently be vindicated, but upon the supposal of this principle of the soul’s immortality :

whereas if this principle be admitted, that men pass out of this life into an eternal state of happiness or misery, according as they have behaved themselves in this world; then the account of the unequal providences of God in this world is easy. For if we look upon this life as a state of probation, of trial to wicked men, and of exercise to good men in order to a future and eternal state; and if we consider withal, how vast the difference is between time and eternity, it will be easy then to apprehend how all things may be set strait in another world, and how the righteousness of God may appear, in giving an abundant recompence to good men for all their temporal service and sufferings, which do but prepare them the more for a quicker relish of the glory and happiness which is reserved for them; and on the other hand, in punishing wicked men, whose short ease and prosperity in this world will, by the just judgment of God for their abuse of the blessings of this life, set out their misery and torment to the greatest disadvantage. For as nothing commends happiness more than precedent sorrow; so nothing makes pain and suffering more bitter and intolerable, than to step into them out of a state of ease and pleasure; so that the pleasures and prosperity of wicked men in this life, considered with the punishment of the next, which will follow upon them, is an addition to their misery. This is the very sting of the second death; and in this sense also that of the wise man is true, "the ease of the simple will slay them, and the prosperity of" these "fools" shall be the great aggravation of their destruction.

2. Another notion which is deeply rooted in the nature of man, is, that there is a difference between good and evil, which is not founded in the imagi-

nation of persons, or in the custom and usage of the world, but in the nature of things; that there are some things which have a natural evil, and turpitude, and deformity in them; for example, impiety and profaneness towards God, injustice and unrighteousness towards men, perfidiousness, injury, ingratitude, these are things that are not only condemned by the positive laws and constitutions of particular nations and governments, but by the general verdict and sentiments of humanity. Piety and religion towards God, justice, and righteousness, and fidelity, and reverence of oaths, regard to a man's word and promise, and gratitude towards those who have obliged us, these and the like qualities, which we call virtues, are not only well spoken of, where they are countenanced by the authority of law, but have the tacit approbation and veneration of mankind: And any man that thinks these things are not naturally and in themselves good, but are merely arbitrary, and depend upon the pleasure of authority, and the will of those who have the power of imposing laws upon others; I say, any such person may easily be convinced of his error, by putting this supposition; suppose wickedness were established by a law, and the practice of fraud, and rapine, and perjury, falseness in a man's word and promises, were commended and rewarded, and it were made a crime for any man to be honest, to have any regard to his oath or promise, and the man that should dare to be honest or make good his word should be severely punished and made a publick example; I say, suppose the reverse of all that which we now call virtue, were solemnly enacted by a law, and publick authority should enjoin the practice of that which we call vice; what would the consequence of this be, when
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the tables were thus turned ? Would that which we now call vice, gain the esteem and reputation of virtue ; and those things which we now call virtue, grow contemptible and become odious to human nature ? If not, then there is a natural and intrinsic difference between good and evil, between virtue and vice ; there is something in the nature of these things which does not depend upon arbitrary constitution. And I think nothing can be more evident, than that the authority which should attempt such an establishment, would thereby be render'd ridiculous, and all laws of such a tendency as this, would be hift out of the world. And the reason of this is plain, because no government could subsist upon these terms : for the very forbidding men to be just and honest, the enjoining of fraud, and violence, and perjury, and breach of trust, would apparently destroy the end of government, which is to preserve men and their rights against the encroachments and inconveniencies of these ; and this end being destroyed, human society would presently disband, and men would naturally fall into a state of war ; which plainly shews that there is a natural, and immutable, and eternal reason for that which we call goodness and virtue, and against that which we call vice and wickedness.

To come then to my purpose, it is very agreeable to this natural notion of the difference between good and evil, to believe the soul's immortality. For nothing is more reasonable to imagine, than that good and evil, as they are differenced in their nature, so they shall be in their rewards ; that it shall one time or other be well to them that do well, and evil to the wicked man. Now seeing this difference is not made in this world, but all things happen alike to all,

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all, the belief of this difference between good and evil, and the different rewards belonging to them, infers another state after this life, which is the very thing we mean by the soul's immortality, namely, that it does not die with the body, but remains after it, and passeth into a state wherein it shall receive a reward suitable to the actions of this life.

And thus I have done with the second argument for the soul's immortality, namely, that this principle doth not contradict those other principles which nature hath planted in us, but doth very well accord and agree with those natural notions which we have of the goodness of God, and of the justice of his providence, and of the real and intrinsical difference between good and evil.

III. This principle of the soul's immortality, is suitable to the natural hopes and fears of men.

To the natural hopes of men. Whence is it that men are so desirous to purchase a lasting fame, and to perpetuate their memory to posterity, but that they hope that there's something belonging to them, which shall survive the fate of the body, and when that lies in the silent grave, shall be sensible of the honour which is done to their memory, and shall enjoy the pleasure of the just and impartial fame, which shall speak of them to posterity without envy or flattery? And this is a thing incident to the greatest and most generous spirits; none so apt as they to feed themselves with these hopes of immortality. What was it made those great spirits among the Romans, so freely to sacrifice their lives for the safety of their country, but an ambition that their names might live after them, and be mentioned with honour when they were dead and gone? Which ambition of theirs, had it not been grounded in the hopes of immor-

immortality, and a natural opinion of another life after this, in which they might enjoy the delight and satisfaction of the fame which they had purchased, nothing could have been more vain and unreasonable. If there were no hopes of a life beyond this, what is there in fame that should tempt any man to forego this present life, with all the contentments and enjoyments of it? What is the pleasure of being well spoken of, when a man is not? What is the happiness which men can promise to themselves, when they are out of being, when they can enjoy nothing, nor be sensible of any thing, because they are not? So that the spring of all those brave and gallant actions, which the heathens did with the hazard of their lives, out of a desire of after-fame and glory; I say, the spring of all those actions, could be no other than the hopes of another life after this, in which they made account to enjoy the pleasure of the fame, which they purchased with the expence and loss of this present life.

But this ardent desire and impatient thirst after fame, concerns but a few of mankind in comparison. I shall therefore instance in something which is more common and general to mankind, which plainly argues this hope of immortality. What is the ground of that peace, and quiet, and satisfaction, which good men find in good and virtuous actions, but that they have a secret persuasion and comfortable hopes that they shall some time or other be rewarded? And we find that they maintain these even when they despair of any reward in this world. Now what do these hopes argue, but a secret belief of a future state, and another life after this, wherein men shall receive the reward of their actions, and inherit the fruit of their doings? Whence is it else, that good
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men, though they find that goodness suffers, and is persecuted in this world, and that the best designs are many times unsuccessful; what is it that bears them up under these disappointments, and makes them constant in a virtuous course, but this hope of another life, in a better state of things hereafter? They have some secret presage in their own minds of a life after death, which will be a time of recompence, as this is of trial.

2. The same may be argued from the natural fears of men. Whence is the secret shame, and fear, and horror, which seizeth upon the minds of men, when they are about a wicked action; yea, though no eye see them, and though what they are doing do not fall under the cognizance of any human court or tribunal? Whence is it that they meet with such checks and rebukes in their own spirits, and feel such a disturbance and confusion in their minds, when they do a vile and unworthy thing; yea, although it be so secretly contrived and so privately managed, that no man can charge them with it, or call them to account for it? What art thou afraid of, man, if there be no life after this? Why do thy joints tremble, and thy knees knock together, if thou be'st in no danger from any thing in this world, and hast no fears of the other? If men had not a natural dread of another world, and sad and dreadful presages of future vengeance, why do not men sin with assurance, when no eye sees them? Why are not men secure, when they have only imagined a mischief privately in their own hearts, and no creature is privy and conscious to it? Why do mens own consciences lash and sting them for these things, which they might do with as great impunity from men in this world, as the most virtuous actions? Whence is it that

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that *cogitare, peccare est*, as *Min. Felix* expresseth it, & *non solum conscios timet, sed & conscientiam?*

“Whence is it that a wicked man is guilty upon account merely of his thoughts, and is not only fearful because of those things which others are conscious of, but because of those things which no body knows but his own conscience?” Whence is it, that,

*Scelus intra se tacitum qui cogitat ullum,
Facti crimen habet,*

That “he that does but imagine and devise secret mischief in his heart is guilty to himself, as if the fact had been committed;” and when no man can charge and accuse him for it, yet,

Nocte dieque suum gestat in pectore testem,

“he carries his accuser in his breast, who does night and day incessantly witness against him?”

And that these fears are natural, the sudden rise of them is a good evidence. They do not proceed from deliberation, men do not reason themselves into these fears, but they spring up in mens minds they know not how; which shews that they are natural. Now a man's natural actions, I mean such as surprize us, and do not proceed from deliberation, are better arguments of the intimate sense of our minds, and do more truly discover the bottom of our hearts, and those notions that are implanted in our natures, than those actions which are governed by reason and discourse, and proceed from deliberation. To demonstrate this by an instance; If a man upon a sudden sight of a snake, do recoil and start back, tremble and grow pale; this is a better argument of a natural antipathy and fear, than it is of a natural cou-

rage, if afterward, when he hath commanded down his fear, he should by his reason persuade himself to take up the snake into his hand. If you would know what a man's natural apprehensions are, take him on the sudden, and give him no time to deliberate. Therefore some cunning politicians have used this way of surprize and sudden questions, to dive into the hearts of men, and discover their secrets.

In like manner, if we would know what mens natural apprehensions are concerning the immortality of the soul, and a future state, observe what mens first thoughts are, whether a man's conscience does not suggest to him such fears upon the commission of sin. There's no doubt but men may offer violence to their natures, and reason themselves into great doubts about the soul's immortality; nay, men may be bribed into the contrary opinion: but this man who in his deliberate discourses denies any rewards after this life, shall by his natural actions acknowledge them, by those fears and terrors, which his guilty conscience is ever and anon surprized withal.

The sum of this argument is, that it is natural for men that live piously and virtuously, that do just and honest and worthy actions, to conceive good hopes that it shall some time or other be well with them; that however they may meet with no reward and recompence in this world, yet verily there will be a reward for the righteous: and on the other hand, wicked men, though they flourish and prosper in their wickedness, yet they are not free from guilt, they are fearful and timorous, even when their condition sets them above the fear of any man upon earth. Now what doth this signify, but that they have some secret presages of an after-punishment? Nature suggests this thought to them, that there will
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be a time when all the sins which they have committed, and the wickedness which they have done, shall be accounted for.

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And it is no prejudice to this truth, that some men sin against their consciences, and by frequent acts of sin, and offering notorious violence to their own light, bring themselves into a brawny and insensible condition, so that they have not those stings and lashes, are not haunted with those fears and terrors which pursue common sinners. This is but reasonable to be expected, that men by frequent acts of sin, should lose the tender sense which mens consciences naturally have of good and evil; that men that lay waste their consciences by gross and notorious sins, should lose the sense of good and evil, and that their consciences should grow hard like the beaten road; nay, it is suitable to the justice of God, to give up such persons to a reprobate sense, to an injudicious mind, that they who would not be awakened and reclaimed by the natural fear of divine justice, which God hath hid in every man's conscience, should at last lose all sense and apprehension of these things, and be permitted securely and without remorse to perfect their own ruin.

IV. This doctrine of the immortality of the soul, does evidently tend to the happiness and perfection of man, and to the good order and government of the world; to the happiness and perfection of man, both considered singly, and in society.

I. To the happiness and perfection of man considered in his single capacity. If it be a thing desirable to be at all, then it is a thing desirable to be continued in being as long as may be, and for ever if it be possible. If life be a perfection, then eternal life is much more so; especially if the circum-

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stances of this present life be considered, together with the state which we hope for hereafter. The condition of men in this present life, is attended with so many frailties, liable to so great miseries and sufferings, to so many pains and diseases, to such various causes of sorrow and trouble, of fear and vexation, by reason of the many hazards and uncertainties, which not only the comforts and contentments of our lives, but even life itself is liable to, that the pleasure and happiness of it is by these very much rebated; so that were not men trained on with the hopes of something better hereafter, life itself would to many men be an insupportable burden; if men were not supported and born up under the anxieties of this present life, with the hopes and expectations of a happier state in another world, mankind would be the most imperfect and unhappy part of God's creation. For although other creatures be subjected to a great deal of vanity and misery, yet they have this happiness, that as they are made for a short duration and continuance, so they are only affected with the present, they do not fret and discontent themselves about the future, they are not liable to be cheated with hopes, nor tormented with fears, nor vexed at disappointments, as the sons of men are.

But if our souls be immortal, this makes abundant amends and compensation for the frailties of this life, and all the transitory sufferings and inconveniencies of this present state; human nature, considered with this advantage, is infinitely above the brute beasts that perish.

As for those torments and miseries which we are liable to in another world, far greater than any thing that men suffer in this life, this ought not in reason to be objected against the immortality of the soul, as

if

if this doctrine did not tend to the happiness and perfection of man : for if this be truly the case of mankind, that God hath made mens souls of an immortal nature, and designed them for a perpetual duration and continuance in another state after this life, in order to which state, he hath placed every man in this world, to be as it were a candidate for eternity, he hath furnished every man with such helps and advantages, such opportunities and means for the attaining of everlasting happiness, that if he be not grossly wanting to himself, he shall not miscarry ; if this be the case, then an immortal nature is a real and mighty privilege. If God puts every man into a capacity of happiness, and if no man becomes miserable but by his own choice, if no man falls short of eternal happiness but by his own fault, then immortality is a privilege in itself, and a curse to none but those who make it so to themselves.

2. This doctrine tends to the happiness of man considered in society, to the good order and government of the world. I do not deny, but if this principle of the immortality of the soul were not believed in the world, if the generality of mankind had no regard to any thing beyond this present life ; I say, I do not deny notwithstanding this, but there would be some kind of government kept up in the world ; the necessities of human nature, and the mischiefs of contention would compel men to some kind of order : but I say withal, that if this principle were banished out of the world, government would want it's most firm basis and foundation ; there would be infinitely more disorders in the world, were men not restrained from injustice and violence by principles of conscience, and the awe of another world. And that this is so, is evident from hence,

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that all magistrates think themselves concerned to cherish religion, and to maintain in the minds of men the belief of a God, and of a future state.

This is the fourth argument, that this doctrine does evidently tend to the happiness of man, and the good order and government of the world. I grant, that this argument alone, and taken singly by itself, is far from enforcing and necessarily concluding the soul's immortality : but if the other arguments be of force to conclude, this added to them is a very proper inducement to persuade and incline men to the belief of this principle ; it does very well serve the purpose for which I bring it, namely, to shew that if there be good arguments for it, no man hath reason to be averse or backward to the belief of it ; if by other arguments we be convinced of the suitableness of this principle to reason, this consideration will satisfy us, that it is not against our interest to entertain it. And no man that is not resolved to live wickedly, hath reason to desire that the contrary should be true. For what would a man gain by it, if the soul were not immortal, but to level himself with the beasts that perish, and to put himself into a worse and more miserable condition than any of the creatures below him ?

SERMON CLXXVI.

Of the immortality of the soul, as discovered by nature, and by revelation.

2 TIM. i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.

THE fifth and last argument is, that this supposition of the soul's immortality gives the fairest account and easiest solution of the phænomena of human nature, of those several actions and operations which we are conscious to ourselves of, and which, without great violence to our reason, cannot be resolved into a bodily principle, and ascribed to meer matter; such are perception, memory, liberty, and the several acts of understanding and reason. These operations we find in ourselves, and we cannot imagine how they should be performed by mere matter; therefore we ought in all reason to resolve them into some principle of another nature from matter, that is, into something that is immaterial, and consequently immortal, that is, incapable in it's own nature of corruption and dissolution.

And that the force of this argument may the better appear, I shall speak something of these distinctly, and shew that none of these operations can be performed from mere matter. I begin with the

1. And lowest, which is sensitive perception, which is nothing else but a consciousness to ourselves of

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of our own sensations, an apprehension of the impressions which are made upon us; and this faculty is that which constitutes the difference between sensitive and insensitive creatures. A stone may have several impressions made upon it, as well as the living creature endowed with sense: but with this difference, that whatever impressions are made upon a stone, by knocking, cutting, or any other kind of motion or action, the stone is stupid, and is not in the least conscious of any of those impressions, does not perceive what is done to it; whereas those creatures which are endowed with sense, do plainly perceive their own and other motions, they are affected with the impressions which are made upon them.

Now we can give no account of this operation from mere matter. It is plain, that matter is not in its own nature sensible: for we find the greatest part of the world to consist of insensible parts, and such as have no perception. Now if matter be granted in itself to be insensible, it is utterly unimaginable, how any motion or configuration of the parts of it, should raise that which hath no sense to a faculty of perception. Epicurus fancied those particles of matter, of which souls were framed, to be the finest and smallest; and for their smoother and easier motion, that they were all of a round figure. But supposing matter not to be naturally and of itself sensible, who can conceive what that is which should awaken the drowsy parts of it, to a lively sense of the impressions made upon it? It is every whit as easy to imagine how an instrument might be framed and tuned so artificially, as to hear its own sounds, and to be marvelously delighted with them; or that a glass might be polished to that fineness, as to see all those objects which are reflected upon it.

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But there is one difficulty in this: for it may be said, if sensitive perception be an argument of the soul's immateriality, and consequently immortality, then the souls of beasts will be immortal, as well as the souls of men. For answer to this, I shall say these things.

(1.) That the most general and common philosophy of the world hath always acknowledged something in beasts besides their bodies, and that the faculty of sense and perception, which is in them, is founded in a principle of a higher nature than matter. And as this was always the common philosophy of the world, so we find it to be a supposition of scripture, which frequently attributes souls to beasts as well as to men, though of a much inferior nature. And therefore those particular philosophers, who have denied any immaterial principle, or a soul to beasts, have also denied them to have sense, any more than a clock or watch, or any other engine; and have imagined them to be nothing else but a finer and more complicated kind of engines, which, by reason of the curiosity and tenderness of their frame, are more easily susceptible of all kind of motions and impressions from without, which impressions are the cause of all those actions, that resemble those sensations which we men find in ourselves; which is to say, that birds, and beasts, and fishes, are nothing else but a more curious sort of puppets, which by certain secret and hidden weights and springs do move up and down, and counterfeit the actions of life and sense. This I confess seems to me to be an odd kind of philosophy; and it hath this vehement prejudice against it, that if this were true, every man would have great cause to question the reality of his own perceptions: for to all appearance the sensations of beasts are as real as ours, and in many things their senses

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senses much more exquisite than ours ; and if nothing can be a sufficient argument to a man, that he is really endowed with sense, besides his own consciousness of it, then every man hath reason to doubt whether all men in the world besides himself be not mere engines ; for no man hath any other evidence, that another man is really endowed with sense, than he hath that brute creatures are so ; for they appear to us to see, and hear, and feel, and smell, and taste things as truly and as exactly as any man in the world does.

(2.) Supposing beasts to have an immaterial principle distinct from their body, it will not from hence follow, that they are immortal, in the sense that we attribute immortality to men. For immortality, when we ascribe it to men, signifies two things.

1. That the soul remains after the body, and is not corrupted and dissolved together with it.

2. That it lives in this separate state, and is sensible of happiness or misery.

1. Immortality imports that the soul remains after the body, and is not corrupted or dissolved together with it. And there is no inconvenience in attributing this sort of immortality to the brute creatures. And here it is not necessary for us, who know so little of the ways and works of God, and of the secrets of nature, to be able to give a particular account what becomes of the souls of brute creatures after death ; whether they return into the soul and spirit of the world, if there be any such thing, as some fancy ; or whether they pass into the bodies of other animals which succeed in their rooms ; I say, this is not necessary to be particularly determined ; it is sufficient to lay down this in general as highly probable, that they are such a sort of spirits, which, as to their operation and life, do necessarily depend upon matter,

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matter, and require union with it, which union being dissolved, they lapse into an insensible condition, and a state of inactivity. For being endowed only with a sensitive principle, the operations of which do plainly depend upon an organical disposition of the body, when the body is dissolved, all their activity ceaseth; and when this visible frame of the world shall be dissolved, and this scene of sensible things shall pass away, then it is not improbable that they shall be discharged out of being, and return to their first nothing: for though in their own nature they would continue longer, yet having served the end of their being, and done their work, it is not unsuitable to the same wisdom that made them, and commanded them into being, to let them sink into their first state.

2dly, Immortality, as applied to the spirits of men, imports that their souls are not only capable of continuing, but living in this separate state, so as to be sensible of happiness and misery. For the soul of man being of an higher nature, and not only endowed with a faculty of sense, but likewise other faculties which have no necessary dependance upon, or connexion with matter; having a sense of God, and of divine and spiritual things, and being capable of happiness in the enjoyment of God, or of misery in a separation from him; it is but reasonable to imagine, that the souls of men shall be admitted to the exercise of these faculties, and the enjoyment of that life which they are capable of in a separate state. And this is that which constitutes that vast and wide difference between the souls of men and beasts: and this degree of immortality is as much above the other, as reason and religion are above sense.

2. Another faculty in us, which argues an immaterial, and consequently an immortal principle in

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man, is memory; and this likewise is common in some degree to several of the brute creatures, and it seems to be nothing else but a kind of continued sensation of things. And of this we can give no account from mere matter. For if that which we call the soul, were nothing else but, as Epicurus imagined, a little wild-fire, a company of small round particles of matter in perpetual motion, it being a fluid thing, it would be liable to a continual dissipation of its parts, and the new parts that come would be altogether strangers to the impressions made upon the old; so that supposing the soul liable but to those changes which the grosser parts of our bodies, our flesh and blood, continually are liable to, by the evaporation and spending of the old, and an accession of new matter; (and if we suppose the soul to be fluid matter, that is, consisting of particles, which are by no kind of connexion linked to one another, it will in all probability be more easily dissipable, than the grosser parts of the body, and) if so, how is it imaginable that these new and foreign particles should retain any sense of the impressions made upon those which are gone many years ago?

3. Another faculty which I shall instance in, is the will of man, which is endowed with liberty and freedom, and gives a man dominion over his own actions. Matter moves by necessary and certain laws, and cannot move if it be at rest, unless it be moved by another; and cannot rest, that is, cannot but move, if it be impelled by another. Whence then are voluntary motions? Whence is the *αὐτεξέσσιον*, the arbitrary principle which we find in ourselves, the freedom of action to do or not to do, to do this or that, which we are intimately conscious to ourselves of? Of all the operations of our minds, it is the hardest to give an account

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account of liberty from mere matter. This Epicurus was sensible of, and infinitely puzzled with it, as we may see by the question which Lucretius puts, S E R M.
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Unde est hæc inquam fati avulsa voluntas?

“ How comes the soul of man to have this peculiar privilege of freedom and liberty, above all other sorts of matter that are in the world? whence is it, that when all things else move by a fatal necessity, the soul of man should be exempted from that slavery?” He does indeed attempt to give an account of it from a motion of declination which is proper and peculiar to the particles of the soul: but that is a more unintelligible riddle than liberty itself. The

4. And last operation I shall instance in, is that of reason and understanding. Not to mention the activity and nimbleness of our thoughts, in the abstracted notions of our minds, the multitude of distinct ideas and notions which dwell together in our souls, none of which are accountable from matter, I shall only instance in two particulars.

(1.) Those acts of reason and judgment whereby we over-rule the reports of our senses, and correct the errors and deceptions of them.

(2.) The contemplation of spiritual and divine things.

(1.) Those acts of reason and judgment whereby we over-rule the reports and determinations of sense. Our sense tells us, that things at a distance are less, than our reason tells us they are really in themselves; as that the body of the sun is but about a foot diameter: but our reason informs us otherwise. Now what is the principle that controls our senses, and corrects the deception of them? If the soul of man be mere

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mere matter, it can only judge of things according to the impressions which are made upon our senses: but we do judge otherwise, and see reason to do so many times. Therefore it must be some higher principle which judges of things, not by the material impressions which they make upon our senses, but by other measures. And therefore to avoid this inconvenience, Epicurus was glad, to fly the absurdity, to affirm that all things really are what they appear to us, and that in truth the sun is no bigger than it seems to be.

(2.) The contemplation of things spiritual and divine, is an argument that the soul is of a higher original than any thing that is material. To contemplate the nature of God, and the divine excellencies and perfections; the meditation of a future state, and of the happiness of another world; those breathings which good men feel in their souls after God, and the enjoyment of him, argue the spiritual nature of the soul. *Hoc habet argumentum divinitatis suæ* (saith Seneca) *quòd eam divina delectant, nec ut alienis interest sed ut suis.* “ The soul of man hath this argument of it’s divine original, that it is so strangely delighted, so infinitely pleased and satisfied with the contemplation of divine things, and is taken up with these thoughts, as if they were it’s proper business and concernment.” Those strong inclinations and desires after immortality, and the pleasure which good men find in the fore-thoughts of the happiness which they hope to enter into, when their souls shall quit these mansions; the restless aspirings of our souls toward God, and those blessed mansions where he dwells, and where the spirits of good men converse with him and one another, these signify our souls to be of a nobler extraction than the earth, that

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that they are descended from above, and that heaven is their country, their thoughts are so much upon it, and they are so desirous to return to it.

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I shall conclude this argument from the noble and excellent operations of our souls, of which we are conscious to ourselves, with a passage of Tully to this purpose. *Animarum nulla in terris origo inveniri potest: nihil enim est in animis mixtum atque concretum, aut quod ex terrâ natum atque fictum esse videatur.*

“The souls of men have not their original from the earth, it is in vain to seek for it there: for there is nothing in the mind of man of a material mixture and composition, which we can imagine to be born or formed out of the earth. For, says he, among material and earthly things there is nothing,” *quod vim memoriæ, mentis, cogitationis habeat, quod & præterita teneat, & futura provideat, & completi possit præsentia.* “There is no earthly thing which hath the power of memory, of understanding, of thought, which retains things past, foresees and provides for things future, comprehends and considers things present.” *Singularis est igitur quædam natura atque vis animi, sejuncta ab his usitatis notisque naturis;* “so that the nature and power of the soul are of a peculiar and singular kind, different from all those natures which we are acquainted with in this world.” He concludes, *Itaque quicquid est quod sentit, quod sapit, quod vult, quod viget, cæleste & divinum est, ob eamque rem æternum sit necesse est.* “Therefore whatever that is which is endowed with a power of perception, with wisdom, with liberty, with so much vigour and activity as the soul of man, is of heavenly and divine original, and for that reason is necessarily immortal, and to continue for ever.”

Thus

Thus I have represented to you, as briefly and plainly as I could, those which I account the chief and strongest arguments of this great principle of religion, the soul's immortality. Some of them are plain and obvious to every capacity; the rest, though they be above common capacities, yet were not to be neglected, because they may be useful to some, though not to all; and as those who are more wise and knowing should have patience, whilst the most common and plainest things are spoken for the instruction of ordinary capacities, so those of lower capacities should be content that many things should be spoken which may be useful to others, though they be above their reach.

To sum up then what has been said from reason, for the proof of the soul's immortality. It is a natural dictate and notion of our minds, universally entertained in all ages and places of the world, excepting some very few persons and sects; it doth not contradict any other principle that nature hath planted in us, but doth very well agree with those other notions which are most natural; it is most suitable to the natural hopes and fears of men; it evidently tends to the happiness and perfection of man, and to the good order and government of the world; lastly, it gives the fairest account of the phenomena of human nature, of those several actions and operations which we are conscious to ourselves of.

Now supposing the soul were immortal, what greater rational evidence than this can we expect for it? How can we without a revelation have more assurance of the things of this nature, than these arguments give us, not taken singly, but as they concur together to make up an entire argument, and to give us sufficient evidence of this?

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I do not say that these arguments do so necessarily conclude it, that there is an absolute impossibility the thing should be otherwise: but so as to render it sufficiently certain to a prudent and considerate man, and one that is willing to accept of reasonable evidence. For the generality of the papists do pertinaciously maintain this unreasonable principle, that there can be no certainty of any thing without infallibility: yet some of the wiser of them have thought better of it, and are pleased to state the business of certainty otherwise; particularly Melchior Canus, one of the most learned of their writers determines those things to be sufficiently certain, which no man can without imprudence and obstinacy disbelieve. *Certa apud homines ea sunt quæ negari sine pervicaciâ & stultitiâ non possunt.* “Men esteem those things certain, which no man that is not unreasonably obstinate and imprudent can deny.” And I think the arguments I have brought for the soul’s immortality, are such as no man that is unprejudiced and hath a prudent regard to his own interest can resist.

Thus I have done with the first thing I propounded to do for the proof of the soul’s immortality, which was to shew what evidence of reason there is for it. I shall speak briefly to the

Second thing I propounded, which was to shew how little can be said against it, because this will indirectly give a strength and force to the arguments I have brought for it. For it is very considerable in any question or controversy, what strength there is in the arguments on both sides: for though very plausible arguments may be brought for a thing, yet if others as plausible and specious may be urged against it, this leaves the thing in æquilibrio, it sets the balance even, and inclines the judgment neither way;

nay, if the objections against a thing be considerable, though not so strong as the arguments for it, the considerableness of the objections does so far weaken the contrary arguments: but where the arguments on one hand are strong, and the objections on the contrary very slight, and such as may easily be answered, the weakness of the objections contributes to the strength of the argument for the other side of the question.

To come then to the business, I know but three objections, which have any colour against this principle.

I. That the notion of a spirit, or an immaterial substance, does imply a contradiction.

Answ. 1. This is only boldly said, and not the least colour of proof offered for it by the author that asserts it. This objection had indeed been considerable, if it had been made out as clearly, as it is confidently affirmed. In the mean time I think we may take leave to deny, that the notion of a spirit hath any repugnancy in it, till some body think fit to prove it.

2. I told you that this question about the soul's immortality, supposeth the existence of God to be already proved; and if there be a God, and it be an essential property of the divine nature, that he is a spirit, then there is such a thing as a spirit and immaterial substance, and consequently the notion of a spirit hath no contradiction in it; for if it had, there could be no such thing.

II. It is said, there is no express text for the soul's immortality in the old testament.

Answ. This doth not properly belong to the intrinsic arguments and reason of the thing, but is matter of revelation. And this I shall fully speak to, when I come to shew what evidence the Jews had
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for the soul's immortality. In the mean time this may be a sufficient answer to this objection, that there is no absolute necessity why it should be expressly revealed in the old testament, if it be, as I have shewn, a natural notion of our minds : for the scripture supposeth us to be men, and to have an antecedent notion of those truths which are implanted in our nature, and therefore chiefly designs to teach us the way to that eternal happiness which we have a natural notion and hope of. The

III. Objection is from the near and intimate sympathy which is between the soul and the body, which appears in the vigour and strength of our faculties ; as understanding and memory do very much depend upon the temper and disposition of the body, and do usually decay and decline with it.

Ans. The utmost that this objection signifies, is, that there is an intimate union and conjunction between the soul and the body, which is the cause of the sympathy which we find to be between them : but it does by no means prove, that they are one and the same essence. Now that there is such an intimate union and connexion between the soul and matter in all creatures endowed with life and sense, is acknowledged by all who affirm the immateriality of souls ; though the manner of this union be altogether unknown to us ; and supposing such an union, it is but reasonable to imagine that there should be such a sympathy, that the body should be affected with the delights and disturbances of the mind, and that the soul should also take part in the pleasures and pains of the body, that by this means it may be effectually excited and stirred up to provide for the supply of our bodily wants and necessities : and from this sympathy, it is easy to give account how it comes to

pass, that our faculties of understanding, and memory, and imagination, are more or less vigorous, according to the good or bad temper and disposition of our bodies. For by the same reason that the mind may be grieved and afflicted at the pains and sufferings of the body, it may likewise be disordered and weakened in it's operations by the distempers of the body. So that this objection only proves the soul to be united to the body; but not to be the same thing with it.

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Of the immortality of the soul, as discovered by nature, and by revelation.

2 T I M. i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel.

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The fourth
sermon on
this text.

HAVING in my three former discourses shewed, what arguments natural reason doth furnish us with, for the immortality of our souls, I come now to the second thing I propounded, which is to shew what assurance the world had *de facto*, of this great principle of religion, the soul's immortality, before the revelation of the gospel.

Before our SAVIOUR's coming into the world, there were but two different religions; that of the heathens, and that of the Jews. The religion of the heathens

heathens was natural religion, corrupted and degenerated into idolatry: the religion of the Jews was revealed and instituted by God; but did suppose natural religion, and was superadded to it. Therefore I shall consider the heathens and the Jews distinctly. And,

First, Shew what assurance the heathens had of this principle of the soul's immortality.

Secondly, What the Jews had of it.

First, What assurance the heathens had of the soul's immortality.

1. It is evident, that there was a general inclination in mankind, even after it's greatest corruption and degeneracy, to the belief of this principle; which appears in that all people and nations of the world, after they were sunk into the greatest degeneracy, and all (except only the Jews) became idolaters, did universally agree in this apprehension, that their souls did remain after their bodies, and pass into a state of happiness or misery, according as they had demeaned themselves in this life. Not that they did generally reason themselves into this apprehension, by any convincing arguments, but did herein follow the bent and tendency of their natures, which did incline them thus to think. For no other reason can be given of the universal consent, even of the most rude and barbarous nations in this principle, besides the inclination of human nature to this opinion; that is, either men come into the world with this notion imprinted upon their minds, or else (which comes all to one) the understanding of man is naturally of such a frame and make, that left to itself, and the free exercise of it's own thoughts, it will fall into this apprehension.

2. The unlearned and common people among
the

the heathen, seem to have had the truest and least wavering apprehensions in this matter; the reason of which seems to be plain, because their belief followed the bias and inclination of their nature, and they had not their natural notions embroiled and disordered by obscure and uncertain reasonings about it, as the philosophers had, whose understandings were perplexed with infinite niceties and objections, which never troubled the heads of the common people. By which means the vulgar had this advantage, that the natural dictates of their minds had their free course; and as they did not argue themselves into this principle, so neither were their natural hopes and fears check'd and controlled by any objections to the contrary.

But then, this principle being only a kind of natural instinct in them, which did not awaken their minds by any deep consideration and reasoning about it, it had no great influence on their lives. For as they were not much troubled with doubts concerning it, so neither did they deeply attend to the consequences of it: but as they followed the inclination of nature in the entertaining of this notion, so because it was not entertained upon deep consideration, it had no great effect upon them.

3. The learned among the heathen did not so generally agree in this principle, and those who did consent in it, were many of them more wavering and unsettled than the common people. Epicurus and his followers were peremptory in the denial of it: but by their own acknowledgment, they did herein offer great violence to their natures, and had much ado to divest themselves of the contrary apprehensions and fears. Therefore the poet, in the person of the epicurean, represents it as a rare piece of happiness,

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pinels, and that which few attained to, to quit themselves of the notions of another state after this life.

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*Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
Atque metus omnes & inexorabile fatum
Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque acherontis avari.*

The Stoicks were very inclinable to the belief of a future state ; but yet they almost every where speak very doubtfully of it. Seneca and Antoninus often speak to this purpose, that if the soul remain after this life, there's no doubt but that good men shall be happy, and bad men miserable ; but whether the soul out-live the body or not, that they could not positively determine. Aristotle hath some express passages for the soul's immortality ; but it seems he was not constant to himself in this matter, or else they have done him a great deal of wrong, who have wrote so many books on both sides, concerning his opinion in this point. Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, and many others of the most eminent philosophers, as Tully tells us, were full, not of assurance, but of very good hopes of the soul's immortality and a future state. Socrates, who was one of the best and wisest of all the heathens, does in his discourses before his death, (as Plato relates them) support and bear up himself against the terrors of death, only with this consideration, that he was full of hopes that when he left this world, he should pass into a far happier and more perfect state ; that he should go to G O D and live with him, and keep company with the spirits of good men : and that he is not positive and peremptory in it, is no argument that he doubted of this more than any thing else ; for that was his fashion in all his discourses, to speak modestly, and with some shew of doubt.

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doubting, even concerning those things whereof he had the greatest assurance : but this is plain, that he was so well assured of it as to die chearfully, and to leave the world without any kind of disturbance, upon the hopes that he had conceived of another life ; and surely they must be pretty confident hopes, that will bear up a man's spirit to such a height when he comes to die. In short, he told his friends the morning before he died, that he had as good assurance of the soul's immortality as human reason could give, and that nothing but a divine revelation could give him greater satisfaction. And to mention no more, Tully, the chief philosopher among the Romans, expresseth himself with a good degree of confidence in this matter. He argues excellently for it in several parts of his works ; but particularly in his book *de Senectute*, he declares his own opinion of it, where, speaking to Scipio and Lælius, he says, “ I do not see why I may not adventure to declare freely to you, what my thoughts are concerning death ; and perhaps I may discern better than others what it is, because I am now by reason of my age not far from it. I believe, says he, that the fathers, those eminent persons and my particular friends, are still alive, and that they live the life which only deserves the name of life.” And afterward, *Nec me solum ratio ac disputatio impulit ut ita crederem, sed nobilitas etiam summorum philosophorum & auctoritas* ; “ nor has reason only and disputation brought me to this belief, but the famous judgment and authority of the chief philosophers.” And having mentioned Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato, he breaks out into this rapture, *Ob præclarum diem quum in illud animorum concilium cætumque proficiscar, & cum ex*

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hæc turbâ & colluvione discedam! “Oh glorious day,
“ when I shall go unto the great council and assembly of spirits, when I shall go out of this tumult
“ and confusion, and quit the sink of this world,
“ when I shall be gathered to all those brave spirits
“ who have left this world, and meet with Cato, the
“ greatest and best of mankind!” What could a
Christian almost say with more extasy? And he concludes, *Quòd si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, libenter erro, nec mihi hunc errorem quo delector, dum vivo, extorqueri volo: sin mortuus, ut quidam minuti philosophi censent, nihil sentiam, non vereor ne hunc errorem meum mortui philosophi irrideant.* “ But if after all I am mistaken
“ herein, I am pleased with my error, which I
“ would not willingly part with whilst I live: and
“ if after my death (as some little philosophers suppose) I shall be deprived of all sense, I have no
“ fear of being exposed and laughed at by them,
“ for this my mistake in the other world.”

Thus you see what assurance the heathens had of this principle, and that there was a general inclination and propension in them to the belief of it; and as it was not firmly and upon good grounds believed among the common people; so neither was it doubted of or called in question among them. Among the philosophers it was a matter of great uncertainty, being stiffly denied by some, doubted of by others; and those who were most inclinable to the entertainment of it, do rather express their desires and hopes of it, than their full assurance concerning it. I come therefore,

Secondly, To the enquiry, what assurance the Jews had of the soul's immortality and a future

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state?

state? And of this, I shall give you an account in these following particulars.

1. They had all the assurance which natural light, and the common reason of mankind does ordinarily afford men concerning this matter; they had common to them with the heathens, all the advantage that nature gives men to come to the knowledge of this truth. But that which I chiefly design to enquire into, is, what singular advantage they had above the heathens, by means of those special revelations which were made to them from God. Therefore,

2. They had by divine revelation a fuller assurance of those truths which have a nearer connexion with this principle, and which do very much tend to facilitate the belief of it; as namely, concerning the providence of God, and his interesting himself particularly in the affairs of the world. In the history of Moses they had a satisfactory account of the original of the world, that God made it, and that he had eminently interposed in the government of it; and had given several eminent testimonies of his providence, in the general deluge which was brought upon the world, and in the dreadful particular judgment from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities; in his special providence towards Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; in that series of miracles whereby their deliverance was wrought out of Egypt, and they were carried through the wilderness to the promised land; and in those two standing miracles of the fruitfulness of every sixth year, because the land was to rest the seventh; and preserving the land from the invasion of enemies, when they came up to Jerusalem three times a year; by which God did testify a very particular and immediate

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mediate providence toward them. Now whatever gives assurance of God's providence, does very much facilitate the belief of a future state. Epicurus was well aware of the connexion of these principles; and therefore in order to the freeing of the minds of men from the fears of a future state, he makes way for it, by removing the providence of God, and denying that he either made the world, or concerned himself in the government of it.

And then besides this, the Jews had assurance of the existence of spirits, by the more immediate ministry of angels among them. And this does directly make way for the belief of an immaterial principle, and consequently of the soul's immortality. And this the Sadducees, who were a kind of Epicureans among the Jews, were sensible of; and therefore as they said that there was no resurrection and no future state after this life, so they denied that there was either angel or spirit, as the apostle tells us, Acts xxiii. 7. From whence by the way we may take notice of the great mistake of those, who, from the opinion of the Sadducees, argue that eternal life was not at all believed under the old testament; because if it had been so, it is not credible that it would have been disowned by those who acknowledged the authority of those books; whereas we see that they denied, to serve their hypothesis, other things which were most expressly revealed in the old testament, as the doctrine of angels and spirits.

3. There were some remarkable instances in the old testament, which did tend very much to persuade men to this truth; I mean the instances of Enoch and Elias, who did not die like other men, but were translated, and taken up into heaven in an extraordinary manner. From which instances it was obvi-

ous to considerate men, to reason, that God did intend by these examples to encourage good men with the hopes of another state after this life. And accordingly the apostle to the Hebrews makes the belief of future rewards a necessary consequence from this instance of Enoch's translation, Heb. xi. 5, 6. "By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

4. This was typified and shadowed forth to them by the legal administrations. The whole œconomy of their worship and temple, of their rites and ceremonies, and sabbaths, did shadow out some farther thing to them, though in a very obscure manner: The land of Canaan, and their coming to the possession of it, after so many years travel in the wilderness, did represent that heavenly inheritance which good men should be possessed of after the troubles of this life. And these were intended by God to signify those greater and better things to them, and so understood by those who were more devout and knowing among them; else the apostle, in his epistle to the Hebrews, had gone upon a very ill ground, when he all along takes it for granted, that the dispensation of the law, and all the ceremonies of it, were of a farther signification, Heb. x. 11. "The law having a shadow of good things to come."

5. This was in general, and by good consequence, though not obvious to all, yet sufficiently to prudent and discerning men, revealed in the book of the law taken precisely; I mean the five books of Moses. It

is said of Abel, that God was pleased with his sacrifice, though with Cain's he was not well pleased, S E R M.
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Gen. iv. Upon this Cain was angry at his brother, and slew him. Now if the immortality of the soul and a future state, be not supposed and taken for granted in this story, this very passage is enough to cut the sinews, and pluck up the roots of all religion. For if there were no rewards after this life, it were obvious for every man to argue from this story, that it was a dangerous thing to please God; if this were all that Abel got by it, to be knocked on the head by his brother, who offended God.

But I shall chiefly insist on the general promises, which we find in these books of Moses, of God's blessing good men, and declaring that he was their God, even after their death. Now I shall shew that these promises did involve the happiness of another life, and were intended by God to signify thus much, and were so understood by good men under that dispensation. That these general promises did contain this sense under them, and were intended by God to signify thus much, is evident from our SAVIOUR's citation of that text, to confute the Sadducees, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" from whence he reasons thus, "now God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him:" the force of which argument was directly and immediately levelled against the main error of the Sadducees, which was the denial of a future state. This our SAVIOUR immediately proves from this text, and by consequence the resurrection, which the Sadducees did not deny upon any other account, but because they did not * believe a future state.

6. Toward the expiration of the legal dispensation,

* See sermon xxxv.
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tion, there was yet a clearer revelation of a future state. The text in Daniel seems to be much plainer than any in the old testament, Dan. xii. 2. "And
" many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth
" shall awake ; some to everlasting life, and some
" to shame and everlasting contempt." And to this text the seven brethren, who were cruelly put to death under the persecution of Antiochus, seem to refer, when they comfort themselves with the hopes of another life, 2 Mac. vii. 9. where one of them, ready to die, says thus to Antiochus, " thou like a fury
" takest us out of this present life ; but the king of
" the world shall raise us up, who have died for his
" laws, unto everlasting life." To the same purpose another of them, ver. 14. when he was tormented, expresseth his confidence thus, " it is good,
" being put to death by men, to look for hope from
" God, to be raised up again by him : but as for
" thee (speaking of Antiochus) thou shalt have no
" resurrection to life." Where he seems to allude to the twofold resurrection mentioned by Daniel. And though this history of the Maccabees be not canonical, yet the apostle hath warranted the truth of it to us, at least in this particular, for he plainly refers to this story, Heb. xi. 35. " Others were tor-
" tured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.

7. Notwithstanding this, I say, that the immortality of the soul, and a future state, was not expressly and clearly revealed in the old testament, at least not in Moses his law. The special and particular promises of that dispensation, were of temporal good things ; and the great blessing of eternal life, was but somewhat obscurely involved and signified in the types and general promises : for considering that
the

the particular promises were plainly of temporal things, it was very obvious to those who were not so prudent and discerning to interpret the general promises, so as to comprehend only that kind of blessings, which were express'd in the special and particular promises, and so likewise to understand the general threatnings. And upon this account, the apostle to the Hebrews principally advanceth the new covenant of the gospel, above the old dispensation; because the gospel had clear, and express, and special promises of eternal life, which the law had not, Heb. viii. 6. "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the Mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." For the same reason CHRIST is said here in the text, "by his appearance to have abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." And so I proceed to the

Second thing I propounded, which is to shew what farther evidence and assurance the gospel gives us of it, than the world had before; what clearer discoveries we have by CHRIST's coming, than the heathens or Jews had before.

That the gospel hath brought to us a clearer discovery of this than they had, is here expressly said; that GOD's gracious purpose concerning our salvation, which was, before the world began, decreed to be accomplished in CHRIST, is now made manifest by his coming into the world; ver. 9. "Who hath saved and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in CHRIST JESUS before the world began, but is now made manifest, &c." Which is emphatically spoken, now,

now, and not till now, importing that before the appearing of our SAVIOUR, it was in great measure hid from the world, and that men had very dark and obscure apprehensions of it, till it was “brought to light by the gospel.” And this is not only affirmed in this place, but very frequently all over the new testament. I will mention some of the most exprefs places to this purpose, John vi. 8. When many of CHRIST’s followers left him, he asks the twelve, “will ye also go away?” To whom Peter answers, “LORD, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” As if he had said, what master should we chuse to follow rather than thee, who bringest to the world the glad tidings of eternal life? What discipline or institution is there in the world, that gives such encouragement to its followers? Others may promise great things in this world; but in the declarations and promises of another life, we cannot rely upon any one but him that comes from GOD, as we are fully persuaded thou dost; for it follows in the next verse, “and we believe, and are sure that thou art the CHRIST, the Son of the living GOD.”

Tit. ii. 10, &c. “The grace of GOD which brings salvation hath appeared to all men, &c.” Where the revelation of the gospel is called “the grace of GOD which brings salvation,” that is, which discovers to the world that eternal happiness, which was in a great measure hid from it before, and encourageth men by the hopes of that blessing to live a holy life. The apostle to the Hebrews doth all along in his epistle, use this as an argument to the Jews, to take them off from the Mosaical institution, and to persuade them to entertain the doctrine of the gospel, as making clearer discoveries, and giving greater assurance

furance of eternal life and salvation, than the law did, Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4, 5. “ For if the word spoken by
“ angels was stedfast, and every transgression and
“ disobedience received a just recompence of reward ;
“ how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salva-
“ tion, which at the first began to be spoken by the
“ LORD, and was confirmed unto us by them that
“ heard him ; GOD also bearing them witness, both
“ with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles
“ and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own
“ will ? For unto the angels hath he not put in sub-
“ jection the world to come, whereof we speak.”
That is, if the promises and threatnings of the law,
which was delivered but “ by the ministry of angels,”
were made good, and the offenders under that dis-
pensation were severely punished, what shall become
of us, if we neglect the dispensation of the gospel,
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gospel promises, is so much greater: For unto the angels, who delivered the law, God gave no power and commission to make clear and express promises of the rewards of another world. "Unto the angels" did he not put in subjection the world to come;" but so hath he done to his Son, "he hath committed all judgment to him, and hath given him power to raise up those who have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and those that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation:" As our SAVIOUR himself speaks, John v. 22. and thus, "he hath put the world to come in subjection unto his Son," having impowered him to encourage and argue men to the obedience of his laws, by the rewards and punishments of another world: whereas the law delivered by angels had only the sanction of temporal threatnings and promises. Heb. vii. 16. The gospel is called "the power of an eternal life," in opposition to the law, which is called "a carnal commandment;" not only because the precepts of it respected the body, but because the promises of it were of temporal good things which belong to this life; and at the 19th verse, the gospel, in opposition to the Mosaical dispensation, is called "the bringing in of a better hope. The law made nothing perfect: but the bringing in of a better hope did;" *ἐπεισαγωγή*, the superinduction of a better hope;" by which the apostle plainly signifies, that this was the imperfection of the Mosaical dispensation, that it did not give men firm hopes and assurance of eternal life; but the gospel hath superinduced this hope, and thereby supplied the great defect of the former administration. To the same purpose he tells us, chap. viii. 6. that CHRIST "hath now obtained a more excellent ministry, for as much as he is the mediator

“ Mediator of a better covenant, established upon
“ better promises.” How better promises? why,
instead of the promises of a temporal Canaan, and
earthly blessings, CHRIST hath given us promises of
eternal life and happiness. Therefore in the next
chapter he is called “ an high priest of the good things
“ to come :” and ver. 15. “ For this cause” he is
said to be “ the mediator of the new testament, that
“ they which are called might receive the promise
“ of the eternal inheritance.” Once more the apostle,
chap. x. 1. makes this the great imperfection of
the law, in opposition to the gospel, that it “ had
“ only a shadow of good things to come, but not
“ the very image of the things ;” that is, it did but
darkly typify and shadow forth the things of another
life, not give us so express an image, and lively representation
of the rewards of another world, as the gospel does. Therefore St. John makes eternal life
to be the great promise of the gospel, the great blessing
which CHRIST hath revealed to the world,
1 John ii. 25. “ this is the promise which he hath
“ promised, even eternal life.” So that you see, that
the full and clear discovery of eternal life is every
where in the new testament attributed to CHRIST,
and to the revelation which by him was made to the
world.

It remains now, that I shew more particularly,
wherein the gospel hath given the world greater evidence
and assurance of a future state, than they had
before.

1. The rewards of another life are most clearly
revealed in the gospel. That God hath made a revelation
of this by CHRIST is an advantage which
the heathen wanted, who were destitute of divine
revelation. There are many truths which men may

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be well inclined to believe, and for the proof of which, the wiser and more knowing sort of men may be able to offer very fair and plausible arguments; and yet for all this, they may have no confident assurance of them, or at least may be very far from a well-grounded certainty, such as will give rest and satisfaction to the mind of a considerate and inquisitive man. All men are not capable of the force of a reason; nay, there are very few who can truly judge of the weakness or strength of an argument. There are many things which admit of very plausible arguments on both sides; and the generality of men are very apt to be imposed upon by very slight arguments, to be moved any way with some little shew and appearance of reason. So that when this principle of the soul's immortality came to be disputed in the world, and the sects of the philosophers, the learned men of those times, came to be divided in opinion about it, some disputing directly against it, others doubting very much of it, and scarce any pretending to any great assurance of it, it was no wonder, if by this means many came to be in suspense about it; but now divine revelation, when that comes, it takes away all doubting, and gives men assurance of that, concerning which they were uncertain before. For every man that believes a GOD, does firmly believe this principle, that whatever is revealed by him is true: But especially if the revelation be clear and express, then it gives full satisfaction to the mind of man, and removes all jealousy and suspicions of the contrary. And this is a great advantage which the gospel gives us in this matter, above what the Jews had. They had some kind of revelation and discovery of this under the dispensation of the law; but very darkly, in types and shadows: but the gospel gives us a most express revelation

velation of it, is full of special promises to this purpose, made in clear words, free from all ambiguity, or liableness to be interpreted to another sense. So that if we compare the law and the gospel together, we shall see a vast difference as to this matter. Under the law, the promise of eternal life was only comprehended in some general words, from which a man that had true notions of God and religion might be able to infer, that God intended some reward for good men, and punishment for wicked men, beyond this life: but the promises of temporal good things were special and exprefs, and their law was full of them. Contrariwise in the new testament, the most special and exprefs promise is that of eternal life, and this the books of the new testament are full of: as for temporal blessings, they are but sparingly and obscurely promised in comparison of the other.

2. The rewards of another life, as they are clearly and exprefsly revealed by the gospel, so that they may have the greater power and influence upon us, and we may have the greater assurance of them, they are revealed with very particular circumstances. And herein the gospel gives us a great advantage, both above the heathens and Jews. For though a man was satisfied in general of a state after this life, that mens souls should survive their bodies, and pass into another world, where it shall be well with them that have done well in this world, and ill to those that have done ill; yet no man, without a revelation, could conjecture the particular circumstances of that state. What wild descriptions do the heathen poets, who were their most ancient divines, make of heaven and hell, of the Elysian fields, and the infernal regions! But now the gospel, for our greater assurance and satisfaction, hath revealed many particular circumstances

cumstances of the future state to us; as that all men at the end of the world shall be summoned to make a solemn appearance before the LORD JESUS CHRIST, whom God hath made judge of the world, as a reward of his patience and sufferings; that the bodies of men shall, in order to that appearance, be raised up by the mighty power of God, and united to their souls, that as they have been instruments of the soul in acts of holiness and sin, so they may take part likewise in the happiness and torments of it. There are several other circumstances the gospel hath revealed to us concerning our future state, which had they not been revealed, we could never have known, hardly have conjectured; in all which, besides the assurance that they are revealed, it is a great satisfaction to us, that there is nothing in them that is unworthy of God, or that favours of the weakness and vanity of human imagination.

3. The gospel gives us yet farther assurance of these things, by such an argument as is like to be the most convincing and satisfactory to common capacities; and that is by a lively instance of the thing to be proved, in "raising CHRIST from the dead," Acts xvii. 30, 31.

It is true indeed, under the old testament there were two instances somewhat of this nature; Enoch and Elias were immediately translated, and taken up alive into heaven; but these two instances do in many respects fall short of the other. For after CHRIST was raised from the dead, he conversed forty days with his disciples, and satisfied them that he was risen; after which he was in their sight visibly taken up into heaven: and as an evidence that he was possessed of his glorious kingdom, he sent down, according to his promise, his holy Spirit in miraculous gifts,

gifts, to assure them by those testimonies of his royalty, that he was in heaven, and to qualify them by those miraculous powers to convince the world of the truth of their doctrine.

Now what argument more proper to convince them of another life after this, than to see a man raised from the dead, and restored to a new life? What fitter to satisfy a man concerning heaven, and the happy estate of those there, than to see one visibly taken up into heaven? And what more fit to assure us, that the promises of the gospel are real, and shall be made good to us, than to see him who made these promises to us, raise himself from the dead, and go up into heaven, and from thence to dispense miraculous gifts and powers abroad in the world, as evidences of the power and authority which he was invested withal? All the philosophical arguments that a man can bring for the soul's immortality, and another life, will have no force upon vulgar apprehensions, in comparison of these sensible demonstrations, which give an experiment of the thing, and furnish us with an instance of something of the same kind, and of equal difficulty with that which is propounded to our belief.

4. And lastly, the effects which the clear discovery of this truth had upon the world, are such, as the world never saw before, and are a farther inducement to persuade us of the truth and the reality of it. After the gospel was entertained in the world, to shew, that those who embraced it did fully believe this principle, and were abundantly satisfied concerning the rewards and happiness of another life, they did for the sake of their religion despise this life and all the enjoyments of it, from a thorough persuasion of a far greater happiness than any this world could afford,

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ford, remaining in the next life. With what cheerfulness did they suffer persecutions, with what joy and triumph did they welcome torments, and embrace death, “knowing in themselves that they had “in heaven a better and more enduring substance!” Thus when “life and immortality was brought to “light by the gospel,” death was as it were quite abolished; those of the weakest age and sex, women and children, did familiarly encounter it with as great a bravery, and bore up against the terrors of it with as much courage, as any of the greatest spirits among the Romans ever did: and this not in a few instances, but in vast numbers. No emperor in the world ever had so numerous an army of persons resolved to fight for him, as this “captain of “our salvation, this prince of life and glory” had of persons courageously resolved, and cheerfully contented to die for him.

Now this wonderful effect, the like of which the world never saw before, was very suitable to the nature of this doctrine. Suppose that God from heaven should have given men assurance of another life after this, in which good men should be unspeakably happy: what more reasonable to imagine, than that persons so assured should despise this life, and all the enjoyments of it, in comparison of the eternal and unconceivable happiness, which they were persuaded they should be made partakers of in another world? So that whatever assurance an express and clear revelation from God of the soul’s immortality and another life, together with the particular circumstances of that state; whatever assurance a lively instance and example of the thing, in the person of him who brings this doctrine to the world; whatever consequent miracles, and suitable effects upon the

as discovered by nature, and by revelation.

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the minds of men to such a principle : I say, whatever assurance and satisfaction these can give of this principle, all this the gospel hath given us, beyond whatever the heathens or Jews had before.

The inference I shall make from this discourse shall be only this ; that if there be such a state after this life, then how does it concern every man to provide for it ? Every action that we do in this life will have a good or bad influence upon our everlasting condition, and the consequences of it will extend themselves to eternity. Did men seriously consider this, that they carry about them immortal souls that shall live for ever, they would not trifle away the opportunities of this life, bend all their thoughts, and imploy their designs in the present gratification of their senses, and the satisfaction of their fleshly part, which shall shortly die and moulder into dust : but they would make provision for the state which is beyond the grave, and lay designs for eternity, which is infinitely the most considerable duration ; they would not, like children, take care for the present, without any prospect to the future, and lay out all they have to please themselves for a day, without any regard to the remaining part of their lives. Nothing can be more unbecoming Christians, whose whole religion pretends to be built upon the firm belief of another world, than to be intent upon the things of this present life, to the neglect of their souls and all eternity.

Seeing then we pretend to be assured of immortal life, and to have clear discoveries of everlasting happiness and glory, as we hope to be made partakers of this portion, let us live as it becomes the candidates of heaven, those that are heirs of another world, and “ the children of the resurrection, that this

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“ grace

“ grace of GOD, which hath brought salvation, may
 “ teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,
 “ and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this
 “ present life, looking for that blessed hope, and the
 “ glorious appearing of the great GOD, and our
 “ SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.”

S E R M O N CLXXVIII.

Of the certainty of a future judgment.

2 C O R. v. 10.

*For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of
 CHRIST, that every one may receive the things
 done in his body, according to that he hath done,
 whether it be good or bad.*

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The first
 sermon on
 this text.

TH E apostle, in the beginning of this chapter, expresseth his earnest desire, if GOD saw it fit, to quit “ this earthly tabernacle, for a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, to be absent from the body, and present with the LORD.” But however GOD should dispose of him, he tells us that he made it his constant endeavour, so to behave himself, that both in this present state, whilst he continued in the body, and when he should quit it, and appear before GOD, he might be approved and accepted of him. And that which made him so careful was, because there was a day certainly coming, wherein every man must give an account of himself to the great judge of the world, and receive the just recompence of his actions done in this life, v. 9, 10. “ Wherefore we labour, that whether
 “ present

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“ present or absent, we may be accepted of him.
“ For we must all appear before the judgment-seat
“ of CHRIST, that every one may receive the things
“ done in the body, according to that he hath done,
“ whether it be good or bad.”

Which words are so plain and powerful, so easy to be understood, and of such a mighty force and influence, if thoroughly believed, that the very repeating of them is sufficient to awaken men to a serious care of their lives and actions, and a powerful consideration to persuade them to do every thing, with respect to that solemn account they must one day make to GOD of all the actions done in this life.

But that the truth contained in them, may make the greater impression upon us, I shall distinctly consider the words, and handle, as briefly as I can, the several propositions contained in them.

The general and principal proposition contained in these words is, the certainty of a future judgment.

But besides this principal proposition, which comprehends the general meaning and intention of these words, there are four other more particular propositions contained in them.

First, That the administration of this judgment will be committed to the LORD JESUS CHRIST; for which reason the tribunal before which we must appear, is called, “ the judgment-seat of CHRIST.
“ We must all appear before the judgment-seat of
“ CHRIST.”

Secondly, That all men are liable to this judgment; no person of what condition soever shall be exempted from it. “ We must all appear.”

Thirdly, That all the actions which men have done in this life shall then come to account, and they

shall be judged for them. "That every one may receive the things done in the body."

Fourthly, That sentence will then be past according to the quality of mens actions, whether good or bad: "every one shall receive according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil."

But I shall at present only speak to the principal proposition contained in the words, concerning the certainty of a future and general judgment, viz. That at the end of the world, there shall be a general and publick assize, when all persons that have lived in this world (except only the judge himself, our blessed SAVIOUR, who is "the man ordained by God to judge the world)" shall come upon their trial, and all the actions which they have done shall come under a strict examination; and according as men have demeaned themselves in this world towards God and man, they shall receive sentence, and rewards shall be distributed to them, according to the nature and quality of their actions. And though all these particulars be not expressed in the text, yet they are virtually contained in the general expressions of it, and fully and clearly delivered in other texts of scripture.

The truth and certainty of a future and general judgment, I shall endeavour to confirm from these three heads of arguments.

I. From the acknowledgments of natural light.

II. From the notions which men generally have of God and his providence.

III. From express and clear revelation of holy scripture.

I. From the acknowledgments of natural light. And I might shew the general consent of mankind in this matter, by all sorts of human testimonies, and from

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From all kinds of writers in all ages: but this would be almost endless, and not so proper for a plain and practical discourse upon this subject. And therefore passing by testimonies, I shall mainly insist upon this, that the consciences of men do secretly acknowledge a difference between good and evil. Hence it is that men find great peace and quiet and satisfaction of mind, in the doing of good and virtuous actions, and have secret and comfortable hopes, that this kind of actions will some time or other be considered and rewarded; and they are apt to maintain these hopes, and to support themselves with them, even when they despair to meet with any reward of their good and honest actions in this world.

And on the other hand, men find a secret fear and horror, and are inwardly ashamed and confounded in their own minds, when they are about a wicked enterprize, and engaged in an ill design; their consciences check them and terrify them, and their own minds bode ill to them, as if mischief and vengeance would overtake them one time or other; and this, when no eye sees them, and what they are a doing does not fall under the cognizance of any human court or tribunal, nor is liable to any censure or punishment from any human authority; yet for all that, they have many stings and lashes from their own minds, feel many checks and rebukes from their own consciences, when they do any thing which they ought not to do, though no man can charge them with it, or call them to an account for it.

Now these hopes and fears do argue, if not the firm belief and persuasion of a future judgment, yet great suspicions and misgivings of it in bad men; and in good men, secret and comfortable apprehensions concerning it. From whence else can it be,
that

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that good men, though they find that virtue is discountenanced, and goodness many times suffers, and is persecuted in this world, and that the best actions and designs are often unsuccessful ; whence I say, is it that good men, notwithstanding this, bear up and persist in their course, but because they have this inward apprehension and persuasion, that there will be a time, when virtue and goodness will be considered and rewarded, though not in this world ? And whence is it, that bad men, though they prosper in their impiety, are yet guilty and fearful and timorous ; but because they stand in awe of a being, greater and more righteous and more powerful than themselves ; but because they have some secret apprehensions of an invisible judge, and inward presage of a future vengeance, which sooner or later will overtake them ; and because they believe there will be a time when all the wickedness they have done shall be accounted for ? Insomuch that when they have done what they can, they cannot shake off these fears, nor quit themselves of these apprehensions of divine justice, threatening and pursuing them for their evil deeds. All which are plain acknowledgments of a natural apprehension and persuasion born with us, and riveted in our minds, concerning a future judgment.

II. This will farther appear from the natural notions which men have of a God, and his providence. This is essential to the notion of a God, that he is good, and holy, and just ; and consequently, that he loves goodness, and hates iniquity ; and therefore it must be agreeable to his nature, to countenance the one, and to discountenance the other, in such a manner as becomes the wise sovereign and governor of the world. Now this cannot be solemnly

ly and openly done, but by a publick distribution of rewards and punishments ; and this we see is not done in this world. The dispensations of God's providence in this world, toward good and bad men, are many times very promiscuous, and very cross, and contrary to what might be expected from the wise and just soveraign of the world, from one whom we believe to love righteousness, and to hate iniquity. For virtuous and holy men are often ill treated in this world, grievously harassed and afflicted, and that " for righteousness sake ;" and bad men many times flourish, and are prosperous, " they are not in trouble like other men, neither are they plagued like other men." And this is a very great objection against the providence of God ; if there were no other consideration had of virtue and vice, no other kind of retribution made to good and bad men, but what we see in this world. And therefore the justice of the divine providence seems to require, that there should be a day of recompence, and a solemn and publick distribution of rewards and punishments to the righteous and to the wicked. For this is plainly a state of trial and probation, of patience, and forbearance to sinners, and of exercise to good men ; and being a state of trial, it is not so proper a season for the distribution of publick justice. But since the justice of God doth not appear in this world, it seems very reasonable to believe, that there will be a time when it will be made manifest, and every eye shall see it ; that God will one day fully vindicate his righteousness, and acquit the honour of his justice, and that there shall be a general assize held, when all men shall have a fair and open trial, and " God will render to every man according to his works."

Now the justice of God's providence is in a great

great measure hid and covered, but there will come *ἡμέρα ἀποκαλύψεως* (as the apostle calls the day of judgment, Rom. ii. 5.) “a day of the revelation
 “ of the righteous judgment of God, when he will
 “ bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his
 “ judgment as the noon-day, and every mouth
 “ shall be stopped,” and every conscience and heart
 of man acknowledge “the righteous judgment of
 “ God.”

And in the mean time God contents himself to give some particular and remarkable instances of his rewarding and punishing justice, in this world, which may be to us an earnest of a future and general judgment; he is pleased sometimes in the dispensations of his providence, clearly to separate and distinguish “the precious from the vile,” remarkably to deliver good men, and “to snare the wicked in the
 “ works of their own hands.” Sometimes he gives good men some foretastes of heaven, some earnest of their future happiness in this life: and on the other hand, he many times gives sinners some *præjudicia divini judicii*, some intimations of a future judgment, and shadows of that “utter darkness,” where they are to dwell for ever; he drops down now and then a little of hell into the conscience of a sinner. That fire which is kindled in some mens consciences in this life, that unspeakable anguish, and those inexplicable horrors, which some sinners have felt in this world, may serve to give us notice of the extreme severity of the divine justice towards impenitent sinners; that miraculous deluge that swept away the old world; those stupendous and terrible showers of fire and brimstone, which consumed Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about; that dreadful earthquake, which swallowed

up Corah and his company, and let them down as it were quick into hell, may serve for pledges and earnest to us of the dismal punishments and torments of the next world.

But notwithstanding all these particular and remarkable instances of the divine justice, yet considering how unequal and promiscuous the greatest part of GOD's providences are in this world, it is highly requisite, that there should be a general judgment, for a more clear and full manifestation of the justice and equity of the divine providence.

II. But this will most evidently appear from the clear and express revelation of the holy scripture. I will not cite texts out of the old testament to this purpose, because these things were but obscurely revealed to the Jews in comparison, "life and immortality being brought to light by the gospel." Yet St. Jude tells us, that there was an early revelation of this to the old world, ver. 14, 15. "And Enoch also the seventh from Adam prophesied of these, saying, behold the LORD cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly." But whether this refer to the flood, or the final judgment of the world, is not so clear and certain; however this is most plainly revealed by our blessed LORD and SAVIOUR, in the new testament. The process of this great day, with several of the particular circumstances of it, are fully described by our SAVIOUR, Matt. xxv. and in the vision of St. John, Rev. xx. 11, 12, 13. And the apostles of our LORD and SAVIOUR do most frequently declare and inculcate it. Acts xvii. 30, 31. "But now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by

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“ that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath
 “ given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised
 “ him from the dead.” Rom. ii. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.
 where speaking of the day of judgment, he calls it,
 “ the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous
 “ judgment of God ; who will render to every man
 “ according to his deeds : to them, who by patient
 “ continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and ho-
 “ nour, and immortality, eternal life : but unto them
 “ that are contentious, and do not obey the truth,
 “ but obey unrighteousness ; indignation and wrath,
 “ tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man
 “ that doth evil.” 1 Pet. i. 17. “ And if ye call on
 “ the father, who without respect of persons judgeth
 “ according to every man’s work.” 2 Pet. iii. 10.
 “ But the day of the LORD will come, in which the
 “ heavens shall pass away with a great noise, &c.”

Thus you see the truth and certainty of a future judgment confirmed, from the acknowledgments of mens natural hopes and fears, from the natural notions which men have concerning God and his providence, and from plain revelation of scripture.

All that I shall do farther at present shall be to make some reflections upon what hath been delivered, concerning the certainty of a future general judgment. And,

I. If there be such a day certainly a coming, it may justly be matter of wonder and astonishment to us, to see the general impiety and stupidity of men, how wicked they are, and how careless of their lives and actions, and how insensible of that “ great and
 “ terrible day of the LORD,” which is coming upon all flesh, and for any thing we know to the contrary, may be very near us, and “ even at the door.” How securely do the great part of men pass away their time,
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some in worldly business, others in worldly pleasures and vanity, and a great many in wickedness and vice?

Surely such men have no apprehensions of a future judgment; surely they do not believe that there will be any memorial of their actions in another world, and that they shall be called to a strict and severe account for all the actions of this life; they do not think that there is a just and powerful being above them, who now observes every thing that they do, and will one day judge them for; that there is a pen always writing, and making a faithful record of all the passages of their lives; and that these volumes shall one day be produced and “opened, and men shall be “judged out of the things that are written in them;” and all our thoughts, words, and actions shall pass under a most severe trial and examination.

Or if men do believe these things, they stifle and suppress this belief, and “detain this great truth of “God in unrighteousness;” they do not attend to it, and consider it, that it may have it’s due awe and influence upon their lives. For it is not imaginable, that if men were possess’d with a firm belief and persuasion of this “great and terrible day of the LORD,” they should be so careless and secure, as we see they are, and have so little regard to what they do; that they should pass whole days, and weeks, and years, in the gross neglect of God and religion, and of their immortal souls; that they should “spend their days “in vanity, and their years in pleasure;” that they should live in a continued course of impiety and profaneness, of leudness and intemperance, in the cursed habits of swearing and cursing; which are now grown so common among us, that a man cannot walk in the street, without having his ears grated with this hellish noise; and that they should go on in

these courses, without any great regret or disturbance, as if no danger attended them, as if justice were asleep, and all their actions would be buried with them, and never rise up against them.

What can we resolve this into, but either into habitual or actual atheism and infidelity? Either men do not at all believe a judgment to come; or else they do not actually consider it, and attend to the natural and proper consequences of such a belief. One of these two is necessary. It seems very hard to charge the generality of wicked men with habitual atheism and unbelief, but that the Spirit of God in scripture so often does it. Psal. xiv. 1. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." How doth that appear? It follows, "they are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doth good." And Psal. xxxvi. 1. "The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes." David speaks as if the wicked practices of men did convince him, that they had no belief and apprehension of a God.

Nay, even after those clear discoveries which the gospel hath made of a future judgment, our SAVIOUR seems to foretel a general infidelity among men, at least as to this particular article of a future judgment, Luke xviii. 8. "Nevertheless when the Son of man shall come, shall he find faith upon the earth?" And St. Peter tells us, 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4. that "there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, where is the promise of his coming?" that is, deriding the belief and expectation which the Christians had of a future judgment.

But to be sure, if the generality of men be not already sunk thus low, as to disbelieve these things,

yet this at least is evident from the lives of men, that they are strangely inconsiderate, and guilty of the most gross and stupid inadvertency that can befall reasonable creatures. For I dare appeal to any man of understanding and serious consideration, whether a greater folly and madness can be imagined, than for men to profess in good earnest to believe, that there is a day shortly coming, wherein they shall appear before the impartial tribunal of the great judge of the world, and all the actions of their lives shall be ransacked and laid open, and that there is not any thing that ever they did, that shall escape a severe censure; yea, and farther to be persuaded, that as it shall upon that trial appear, that they have demeaned themselves in this world, they shall be sentenced to an eternal and unchangeable state, of happiness or misery, in the other world; and yet after all this conviction, to live at such a mad and careless rate, as no man in reason can live, but he that is undoubtedly certain of the contrary of all this, and verily persuaded in his heart, that not one syllable of what the gospel says concerning these matters, is true; this is so incredible a stupidity and folly, that did not frequent and undeniable experience make us sure of the truth of it, out of mere charity and respect to human nature, it were not to be believed. “Consider this
“all ye that forget God, and put far from you the
“evil day; consider and shew yourselves men, O ye
“transgressors!” who profess to believe a future judgment, and yet run the hazard of it, as if ye had no fear and suspicion of any such thing.

II. Having considered, not without wonder and astonishment, what manner of persons the generality of men are, notwithstanding all the assurance we have of a future judgment, let us in the next place consider,

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der, "seeing these things shall be, what manner of persons we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness, waiting for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God," as the apostle argues, 2 Pet. iii. 11, 12. How should the serious belief of this great principle of religion work upon us, that we must all appear before the judgment seat of CHRIST, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil?" St. Paul tells us, that the consideration of it had a mighty awe and influence upon him, to be careful of himself, and to be concerned for others: to be careful of himself, in the verse before the text, "wherefore we labour that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of CHRIST." And to be concerned for others, that they may prevent the terrors of that day, in the verse immediately after the text, "knowing therefore the terror of the LORD, we persuade men. Knowing the terror of the LORD;" it were no difficult matter to make such a dreadful representation of this "great and terrible day of the LORD," as would affright the stoutest sinner, and make every joint of him to tremble: but it is much more desirable, that men should be wrought upon by reason, and convinced and persuaded by a calm and sober consideration of things; because that is likely to have a better and more lasting effect, than present terror and amazement; and therefore I shall content myself with the naked representation of the thing, in the plain and powerful expressions of the holy scriptures. Imagine then thou sawest "the Son of man coming in great power and great glory, and all his holy angels with him;" that thou heardest the great trumpet

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trumpet sound, and a mighty voice piercing the heavens and the earth, saying, "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment." Suppose thou sawest "the thrones set, and the great judge sitting upon the throne of his glory, and all nations gathered before him, and all the dead, both small and great, standing before God, the books opened, and the dead judged out of the things written in those books:" and the several sentences pronounced from the mouth of CHRIST himself, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world;" and, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Would not this be a dreadful and amazing sight! Why the gospel plainly declares that all this shall be, and thou professest to believe it. Why then dost thou not live as if thou didst believe these things; Why should not that which will certainly be, have to all reasonable purposes the same effect upon thee, as if it were already and actually present? Why do men suffer themselves to be diverted from the attentive consideration of so important a matter, by the impertinent trifles of this world? Why do we not make wise and speedy preparation for "that day," which "will certainly come?" but we are uncertain when it will come, for "it will come as a thief in the night, and as a snare upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth." Why dost thou stifle thy conscience, and drown the loud cries of it, with the din and noise of worldly business? Why dost thou at any time check and suppress the thoughts of a future judgment, and "put far from thee the evil day?" and not rather suffer the terrors of it to haunt and pursue thee, till they have made thee weary of thy wicked

wicked life, till they have reclaimed thee to thy duty; and effectually persuaded thee, “to break off thy “ sins by repentance;” and to resolve upon such a holy and virtuous course of life, that thou mayst be able, not only with peace and comfort, but with joy and triumph, to entertain the thoughts of that day?

Reason thus with thyself, if this day be so dreadful at a distance, that I can hardly now bear the thoughts of it, how insupportable will the thing itself be, when it comes to be present; and if it will come nevertheless, nor the later for my not thinking of it, is it not reasonable, instead of putting away the thoughts of it, to endeavour by all possible means to prevent the terrors of it?

We especially, who profess ourselves Christians, and live in the clear light of the gospel, ought to consider, that we cannot plead ignorance for our excuse, as the heathen world might. We read and hear the gospel every day, “wherein the wrath of “ God is clearly revealed against all ungodliness and “ unrighteousness of men:” So that if we continue impenitent, we have no cloak, no excuse for ourselves; wo unto as above all others! “It shall be “ more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for Sodom and “ Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for us. “ The times of ignorance,” saith St. Paul, speaking of the heathen world, “the times of this ignorance “ God winked at; but now he commands all men “ every where to repent, because he hath appointed “ a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, “ whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in “ that he hath raised him from the dead.” Thus much concerning the general proposition, the certainty of a future judgment.

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Of the person by whom the world shall
be judged.

2 COR. v. 20.

*For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of
CHRIST, that every one may receive the things done
in his body, according to that he hath done, whether
it be good or bad.*

I N these words, besides the general point mainly
intended, concerning the certainty of a future and
general judgment, there are likewise several particu-
lar propositions.

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The
second
sermon on
this text.

First, That the administration of this judgment
is committed to the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Secondly, That all men are liable to this judgment.

Thirdly, That all the actions which men have done
in this life shall then come to account, and they shall
be judged for them.

Fourthly, That this sentence shall be past upon
men according to the nature and quality of their
actions, whether good or evil. I have handled the
general point, the certainty of a future judgment: I
shall now proceed to the particular propositions con-
tained in the text, and shall handle them in the order
in which I have proposed them.

First, That the administration of this judgment is
committed to the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and that he
is the person constituted and ordained of GOD, to be
the judge of the world. The tribunal before which

we must stand, is here in the text called "the judgment seat of CHRIST." "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST." In the prosecution of this I shall,

First, Endeavour to confirm and illustrate the truth of this proposition.

Secondly, Draw some inferences from it, by way of application.

First, For the confirmation of it, I shall do these two things.

I. Prove it from clear testimony of scripture.

II. Endeavour to give some account of this oeconomy and dispensation; why GOD hath committed the administration of this great work to the LORD JESUS CHRIST; in all which I shall rely only upon scripture, the thing being capable of no other proof or evidence. And indeed the whole mediatory undertaking of our blessed SAVIOUR, and all the circumstances of it, are matter of pure revelation; this is "the hidden and manifold wisdom of GOD, which none of the princes and philosophers of this world knew," and which we could not possibly have found out and discovered, had not GOD been pleased to reveal it to us.

I. I shall prove this from express testimony of scripture, that the LORD JESUS CHRIST is the person constituted and ordained by GOD, to administer the judgment of the great day. Matt. xiii. 40, 41, 42, 43. "So shall it be in the end of this world. "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of
" their

“ their father.” Here our SAVIOUR is represented as the chief minister of GOD’s justice, in the distribution of rewards to the righteous and the wicked; and though the effect and execution of the sentence only be express’d, yet it supposeth a judicial process preceding. So likewise Matt. xvi. 27. “ For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his holy angels, and then he shall reward every man according to his work.” “ Shall come in the glory of his Father,” that is, with his authority committed to him. Matt. xxiv. 30. where our SAVIOUR speaking of his coming to judge the world, it is said, “ then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory;” that is, in order to the judgment of the world. But most fully and expressly, Matt. xxv. 31. where you have the manner of his coming particularly described, together with the solemn representation of the process of that day. “ When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate the one from another, as the shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the king say to them on his right hand, &c.” You see the whole administration of this judgment, and the management of every part of it, is committed to CHRIST. John v. 22. Our SAVIOUR there produceth his commission, and tells us from whence this authority was derived to him. “ The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to

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“ the Son.” And ver. 27. “ He hath given him
“ authority also to execute judgment, because he is
“ the Son of man.” Acts x. 42. “ And he com-
“ manded us to preach unto the people, and to tes-
“ tify that it is he that is ordained of GOD, to be the
“ judge of quick and dead.” Acts xvii. 31. “ He
“ hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the
“ world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath
“ ordained,” that is, by JESUS CHRIST; for it fol-
“ lows, “ whereof he hath given assurance unto all men,
“ in that he hath raised him from the dead.” Rom.
ii. 16. “ In the day when GOD shall judge the secrets
“ of men by JESUS CHRIST.” Rom. xiv. 10.
“ We shall all stand before the judgment seat of
“ CHRIST.” 2 Theff. i. 7, 8, 9. The apostle there
speaking of the day of judgment, describes it thus;
“ When the LORD JESUS shall be revealed from
“ heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire,
“ taking vengeance on all them that know not GOD,
“ and obey not the gospel of his Son; who shall be
“ punished with everlasting destruction from the pre-
“ sence of the LORD, and from the glory of his
“ power.” 2 Tim. iv. 1. “ I charge thee, faith St.
“ Paul there to Timothy, before GOD, and the LORD
“ JESUS CHRIST, who shall judge the quick and the
“ dead at his appearing, and his kingdom.” Rev.
xxii. 12. “ Behold I come quickly, faith our LORD,
“ and my reward is with me, to give to every man
“ according as his work shall be.” I proceed to the

II. Thing I proposed, namely, to give some ac-
count, why GOD hath committed the administration
of this work, into the hands of the LORD JESUS
CHRIST. And of this I shall give an account in
these two particulars.

I. GOD thought fit to confer this honour upon
CHRIST,

CHRIST, as a suitable reward of his patience and sufferings. S E R M.
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2. He thought fit likewise hereby to declare the righteousness and equity of his judgment, in that mankind is judged by one in their own nature, a man like themselves.

1. GOD hath thought fit to confer this honour upon CHRIST, as a suitable reward of his obedience and sufferings, of his coming into the world by his appointment, to undertake the work of our redemption, and to mediate a reconciliation between GOD and us, of his voluntary submission to a condition so mean and low, to that poverty and contempt, and to those extreme sufferings which he did so patiently undergo, in the prosecution of this great design.

That GOD hath committed all power to CHRIST, with design to put an honour upon him, our SAVIOUR himself tells us, John v. 22, 23. "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." The scripture speaks of this matter, as if when CHRIST undertook the great work of our redemption, it were expressly covenanted between GOD the Father and him, that he should undertake this work, and submit to all those grievous things, which were necessary to be done and suffered, in order to the effecting of it; and that when he had accomplished it, GOD would confer this glory upon him, that in his human nature he should be "exalted to the right-hand of GOD, and have power given him over all flesh, to judge the world, and to give eternal life to as many as he pleased;" and when he had received this reward, that then his mediatory office should cease, and he should "resign up the kingdom to
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“ God the Father, that God might be all in all.”
This is the scope and design of the several texts of scripture concerning this matter.

With relation to this covenant and agreement between him and his Father, he prays, John xvii. 1, 2. that he would not be unmindful of the glory which he had promised to invest him withal. “ Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son ; as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” And ver. 4, 5. “ I have glorified thee on the earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” And then he claims the reward of it. “ And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self.” And the apostle to the Hebrews, chap. xii. 2. tells us, that the hopes of this did encourage, and bear up our LORD under his sufferings, “ who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right-hand of the throne of God.” And St. Peter tells us, 1 Pet. i. 11. that “ the prophets of old testified before-hand the sufferings of CHRIST, and the glory that should follow.” And St. Paul tells us what this glory is, “ Eph. i. 20, 21. viz. that “ God hath set him at his own right-hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come” But most expressly, Phil. ii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. the same apostle tells us, that in consideration of the great humiliation and sufferings of CHRIST, “ God hath highly exalted him. He made himself of no reputation, (he emptied himself) and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made

“ in

“ in the likeness of men. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name : that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth : and that every tongue should confess that JESUS CHRIST is LORD, to the glory of God the Father” And that the giving of this name and authority to CHRIST, upon account whereof all creatures should be subject to him, doth principally import that power of judging the world which was committed to him, is evident from the explication of these phrases, of “ bowing the knee to CHRIST, and of confessing to him with the tongue,” which the same apostle tells us elsewhere do signify our being judged by him. Rom. xiv. 10, 11. “ We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of CHRIST : for it is written, As I live, saith the LORD, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.”

So that you see that the glorious reward of CHRIST's self-denial and suffering, doth principally consist in having the judgment of the world committed to him, which therefore is called “ his kingdom. Matth. xvi. 28. where our SAVIOUR expresseth it by “ the Son of man's coming in his kingdom. 2 Tim. iv. 1. “ I charge thee therefore,” saith St. Paul to Timothy, “ before God and the LORD JESUS CHRIST, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom.” And it is with relation to this power

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er and authority, that the title of king is given to him, Matth. xxv. 34. "Then shall the king say
 "unto them on his right-hand, &c." And the scripture almost every where, when it speaks of CHRIST's coming, calls it his "glorious appearance." Matth. xvi. 27. "They shall see the Son of man
 "coming in the glory of his Father. Mat. xxiv. 30. "They shall see the Son of man coming with power
 "and great glory." Mat. xxv. 31. "When the
 "Son of man shall come in his glory." And Tit. ii. 13. it is called, "the glorious appearance of the
 "great God, and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST."

And this is a very suitable reward of his great submission and sufferings, that he who lived in so mean and obscure a condition, should come in great glory; that he who was rejected and despised of men, should be attended on by mighty angels; that he who was arraigned and condemned by the powers of the world, should have authority given him to summon all, both small and great, the kings and great men, and judges of the earth, to appear at his bar, and to receive sentence at his mouth.

And this shall be the last act of his mediatorship, to sit in judgment upon the world, to distribute rewards to his faithful servants, and to punish his obstinate and implacable enemies. And when this work is finished, then this authority shall expire, and the office and kingdom of the mediator shall cease; for
 "when he shall have subdued all things to himself," as the apostle expressly tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, &c. "then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father,
 "when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign, till he hath
 "put all enemies under his feet. And when all things
 "shall

“ shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also
“ himself be subject unto him that hath put all things
“ under him, that God may be all in all.”

2. GOD hath committed the administration of this judgment to CHRIST, that he might hereby declare the righteousness and equity of it, in that mankind is judged by one in their own nature, a man like themselves. And therefore we find that the scripture, when it speaks of CHRIST as judge of the world, doth almost constantly call him man, and “ the Son of man.” In the places I have mentioned before, Matth. xiii. 41. “ The Son of man shall send forth his angels.” And Matth. xvi. 27. “ The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father.” Matth. xxiv. 30. “ Then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.” Matth. xxv. 31. “ When the Son of man shall come in his glory.” Acts xvii. 31. “ He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained.” By the constant use of which expression, the scripture doth give us plainly to understand, that this great honour of being judge of the world was conferred upon the human nature of CHRIST. For as he is GOD, he is over all, and judge of the world, and could not derive this power from any, it being originally inherent in the Deity. Which likewise appears in those expressions of his being ordained a judge, and having “ all authority and judgment committed and given to him.” Acts xvii. 31. “ He will judge the world in righteousness by that man, whom he hath ordained.” And John v. 22. “ The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son.”

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er and authority, that the title of king is given to him, Matth. xxv. 34. "Then shall the king say
"unto them on his right-hand, &c." And the scripture almost every where, when it speaks of CHRIST's coming, calls it his "glorious appearance." Matth. xvi. 27. "They shall see the Son of man
"coming in the glory of his Father. Mat. xxiv. 30. "They shall see the Son of man coming with power
"and great glory." Mat. xxv. 31. "When the
"Son of man shall come in his glory." And Tit. ii. 13. it is called, "the glorious appearance of the
"great God, and our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST."

And this is a very suitable reward of his great submission and sufferings, that he who lived in so mean and obscure a condition, should come in great glory; that he who was rejected and despised of men, should be attended on by mighty angels; that he who was arraigned and condemned by the powers of the world, should have authority given him to summon all, both small and great, the kings and great men, and judges of the earth, to appear at his bar, and to receive sentence at his mouth.

And this shall be the last act of his mediatorship, to sit in judgment upon the world, to distribute rewards to his faithful servants, and to punish his obstinate and implacable enemies. And when this work is finished, then this authority shall expire, and the office and kingdom of the mediator shall cease; for
"when he shall have subdued all things to himself," as the apostle expressly tells us, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, &c. "then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father,
"when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign, till he hath
"put all enemies under his feet. And when all things
"shall

“ shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also
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And ver. 27. "He hath given him authority to execute judgment." Now this cannot be said of CHRIST as GOD, but in respect of his human nature. And this is clear beyond all exception, by what our SAVIOUR adds, as a reason why this authority is committed to him; "he hath given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man;" that is, because in that respect, and no other, he is capable of having this authority derived to him; for as he is the Son of GOD, he hath it in himself. And perhaps for this reason likewise, because in respect of his human nature, he is visible; and man being part of the visible creation of GOD, and the judgment of the great day being to be administered in a visible manner, and to that end the bodies of men to be raised and united to their souls, in order to their visible appearance at this judgment; it seems very congruous, that the Son of man, clothed in our nature and invested with a human body, should sit in judgment upon mankind.

But principally because nothing can more effectually declare the equity of this judgment, and that it shall be administered in righteousness, than that GOD hath ordained a man like ourselves to sit in judgment upon us. In human judgments, it is reckoned a great piece of equity, for men to be tried by their peers, to be acquitted or condemned by those, who are as near as may be to them, and in the same circumstances of rank and condition with themselves; because such are like to understand their case best, and to have a fair and equitable consideration of all the circumstances belonging to it. Now CHRIST, as he is "the Son of man," is near to us, "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, made in all things like unto us, only without sin;" which

which was necessary to qualify him to be our judge ; he dwelt among us, and understands all our circumstances, and whatever may have influence upon our case, to extenuate or aggravate our guilt. What the apostle to the Hebrews says of CHRIST as an high-priest, may be applied to him as a judge, Heb. iv. 15. " We have not a judge, which cannot be " touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but " was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

That which now remains, is to draw some inferences from what I have discoursed to you upon this argument.

I. If the LORD JESUS CHRIST shall judge the world, and we must " all appear before his judgment-seat," then it greatly concerns every one of us so to demean ourselves in this world, that we may be accepted of him in the next. If a man be to be tried for his life, how will he court the favour of the judge, that when he comes to stand at his bar, he may receive a gracious sentence from his mouth ? Why there is a day certainly coming, when every one of us must appear before the tribunal of the great judge of the world ; and therefore we should with all possible care and diligence endeavour to approve our consciences, and all the actions of our lives to him. " Wherefore we labour," saith the apostle immediately before my text, " that whether present " or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we " must all appear before the judgment-seat of " CHRIST." This is that which makes his acceptance and approbation so valuable and considerable, that he is to be our judge, to him we must stand or fall, by his sentence we shall be cast or cleared for ever.

We are very apt to court the favour of great men, of the princes and judges of this world, that when we come to stand in need of it, we may have the benefit and comfort of it. But this is not our great interest ; for the sentence that men can pass upon us, doth but operate for a little while, the effect and consequences of it do not reach beyond this world, it is not final and conclusive as to our eternal state. To allude to that saying of Solomon's, " many seek the prince's favour : but every man's judgment is of the LORD." We seek the favour of the great men of this world : but there is a greater man than any of these, whom we are apt to despise and neglect, " the prince of the kings of the earth, the man who is ordained of God, to be judge both of quick and dead." Every man's judgment shall be from him, it is his sentence which above all other we have most reason to desire or dread. Therefore we should have regard to him, and by submitting to his scepter, and yielding a willing obedience to the laws of his holy gospel, seek his favour, lest " he break us with a rod of iron, and dash us in pieces like a potter's vessel." This advice we find given " to the kings and rulers of the earth," Psal. ii. 10, 11, 12. " Be wise now therefore, O ye kings ; and be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little : blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

2. This is matter of great comfort to all sincere Christians, that CHRIST shall judge the world ; as it likewise is of great terror to all that disobey the gospel, and by their wicked lives confute their profession, and pretended belief of it. CHRIST is

“ the author of eternal salvation to them that obey ^{S E R M.}
“ him,” and to none else. He hath not only pur- ^{CLXXI.}
chased this salvation for us, but by a publick, and
solemn, and authoritative sentence, will confer it up-
on us.

Indeed it is justly matter of great terror to the
wicked of the world, who live in ungodliness and
worldly lusts, and under the name and title of Chri-
stians, have “trampled under foot the Son of God”
and by their lives have openly declared, that “they
“ would not have this man rule over them.” Sure
it cannot but be matter of great horror and amaze-
ment to such persons, to think of this judge, and to
consider, that he, whom by their lewd lives and prac-
tices they have so contemned in this world, will sit
as judge upon them, and condemn them in the next.
And therefore our SAVIOUR tells us, Luke xxi. 25,
&c. that when the day of judgment shall surprize
the world, and “they shall see the Son of man
“ coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and
“ great glory;” then the wicked of the earth shall
be in great distress and perplexity, and “their hearts
“ shall fail them for fear, and for looking after those
“ things which are coming upon the earth:” but
that to good men it shall be a day of great joy, and
that the approach of it shall revive their spirits, and
raise their heads, ver. 28. “But when these things
“ shall begin to come to pass, then lift up your heads
“ with joy, because your redemption draws nigh.”

And this consideration is matter of great comfort
to all good men, both upon account of their suffer-
ings and services for CHRIST. In respect of their
sufferings for him. In this world they are exposed
to great trials and persecutions for him: but he, for
whose name we suffer, is to give us our reward; he,
who

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who is of the same nature with us, and "took part
" of flesh and blood," and suffered himself "in the
" flesh," more grievously than any of us can suffer; he it is, to whom God hath referred it, to consider our sufferings, and give what rewards to them he thinks fit. And then in respect of our services. Though the best of them be imperfect, and nothing that we do is able to abide the severity of his justice yet by virtue of his meritorious sacrifice and satisfaction, the imperfection of them is pardoned, and the sincerity of them is accepted. For he being our judge, who was our sacrifice, and is our "advocate
" with the Father," we may rest assured, that he will plead our cause for us, and the merit of his own sufferings, in bar of that sentence which strict justice would pass upon us.

3. And lastly, this shews what reason the ministers of CHRIST have, to be earnest and importunate with sinners, to repent and turn to God, to believe and obey the gospel of CHRIST, that they may have him their friend, who will certainly be their judge. This inference the apostle makes from this doctrine, in the words immediately after the text. "Knowing therefore the terror of the LORD, we persuade men;" we who are employed by CHRIST, to warn sinners of the danger and terror of a future judgment, who are ambassadors sent from this great king and judge of the world, to treat with sinners, and to offer peace to them, and "in CHRIST's
" stead to beseech them to be reconciled to God," as the apostle speaks in the latter part of this chapter. So that if we ourselves believe what we preach to others, to be the word and law of him who shall shortly judge us, and them that hear us, can we forbear with all possible importunity to solicit their repentance,

repentance, and to warn them "to flee from the wrath
"which is to come?" Can we let them sleep in their
sins, when we see them neglect so great a happiness,
and run themselves upon so intolerable a misery? If
we believe that holy book out of which we preach,
and the discoveries and revelation there made, we may
take an easy prospect of another world, and see "the
"wrath of God revealed from heaven, against all
"ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." For
the gospel hath made a more particular and clear dis-
covery to us of the state of the next world, and the
proceedings of the great day, than ever the world
was acquainted with before. It tells us who is the
person that shall sit in judgment upon us, even "JE-
"SUS CHRIST, whereof God hath given assurance
"unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the
"dead." Now if we know this, and be assured of
it, we cannot but deal plainly with sinners, and out
of tender pity and compassion to them, endeavour
to make them sensible of the sad issue and event of a
wicked life, and that without repentance and amend-
ment they will not be able to stand in the judgment
of the great day. When we see men in the high-
way to ruin and destruction, and the evil day mak-
ing haste towards them, we cannot but warn them
of that sad fate which hangs over them, and endea-
vour by all means to rescue them from that extreme
and endless misery, which is ready to overtake them.

Consider then, sinner, whom it is thou now reject-
est and despisest, and whose laws thou castest behind
thy back. It is he, who for all his mean appearance in
the world, is "the LORD of glory," into whose
hand "the Father hath committed all judgment."
And can there be a greater madness, than to provoke
and make him thine enemy, who shall be thy judge?
than

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than to despise him, who can destroy thee? He appeared once as "a lamb to take away the sins of the world:" but if through our obstinacy and impenitency we render this appearance of his ineffectual for our recovery, he will appear a second time in a more terrible manner, as "a lion to tear us in pieces." He came once as "a light into the world," in a still and gentle way, to convince and convert sinners: but if we resist this light, he will come "in flaming fire to take vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of his Son."

And this is that which will make us speechless, and fill our faces with everlasting confusion, at the second coming of CHRIST, that we have frustrated and made void the end of his first coming. What shall we be able to say to him, when he comes to judge us, who rejected him, when he came to save us? With what reason can we hope that he will deliver us from hell, when we would not be saved by him "from our sins, and redeemed from our vain conversation?"

I will conclude all with that merciful warning which the judge himself hath given us, and left upon record, Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36. "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man."

S E R M O N CLXXX.

Of the persons who are to be judged.

2 C O R. v. 10.

For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

I Proceed to the second proposition contained in S E R M. CLXXX. the words, viz. that all men are liable to this judgment, and that no man that ever lived in the world, except our blessed SAVIOUR the judge himself, shall be exempted from it. *The third sermon on this text.* “We must all appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST.”

I shall first endeavour to illustrate and confirm the truth of this proposition; and then apply it to ourselves.

First, For the confirmation of it. This I shall endeavour to do from exprefs testimonies of scripture; and then by arguments drawn from reason and scripture together.

I. I shall endeavour to confirm the truth of this point from exprefs testimonies of scripture. And we find that the scripture useth words of the greatest latitude and extent, to exprefs this matter more emphatically to us. Gen. xviii. 25. God is called “the Judge of all the earth. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Matt. xxv. 32. ’tis said, that “when CHRIST shall sit upon the throne of his glory, all nations shall be gathered before him.” Acts x. 42. he is said to be “ordained of God to be Judge

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“ Judge of quick and dead.” And so likewise, 1 Pet. iv. 5. “ Who shall give an account to him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead.” This expression is purposely used to take in all persons that have ever lived in the world; not only those that shall be already dead at the coming of CHRIST, but those that shall be found alive at his coming, who though they shall not die, yet they shall undergo a sudden and equivalent change, as St. Paul tells us from particular revelation, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. “ Behold, I shew you a mystery: we shall not all sleep,” that is, we shall not all die, and sleep in the grave, “ but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump (for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed;)” that is, they that are already dead shall be then raised, and their corruptible bodies changed into incorruptible; and they that shall be found alive, though they shall not die, yet their bodies shall undergo the same change with those that are raised. And this is the reason why CHRIST is often in scripture called “ the Judge of quick and dead.”

But to proceed to other texts. Acts xvii. 31. “ He hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness.” The world, that is, all men that ever lived in it. “ He commands all men every where to repent,” because he will judge all men. Rom. xiv. 10, 11, 12. “ We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of CHRIST; for it is written, as I live saith the LORD, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to GOD. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to GOD.” Heb. ix. 27. “ It is appointed for all men once to die, and after this

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"the judgment." That is, as death shall pass upon all men, or a change equivalent to it, so after death the judgment shall pass upon the same persons. Heb. xii. 23. "And to God the judge of all." 1 Pet. i. 17. "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth every man according to his works."

And to express this the more fully, the scripture reckons up the several ranks and conditions of men, to shew that none shall be exempted. Rev. vi. 15, 16, 17. where you have a representation of the day of judgment, and several sorts of men in vain endeavouring to hide themselves from it and escape it. "And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free-man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" Which words are a lively representation of the universal appearance, that all persons in the world, of all ranks and conditions, must make before God at that great day. If any be exempted, they must either be secured by their power and interest, or overlooked for their meanness and inconsiderableness; but none shall either be privileged for their greatness, or neglected for their meanness. If any can pretend to be privileged, it must be those of greatest dignity and authority, "the kings and great men;" or of the greatest esteem, "the rich men of the earth;" or of the greatest strength and power, "the chief captains, and the mighty men;" but these have no protection

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tion against the arrest of that judgment. Nor shall any be overlooked for their meanness. If any sort of men be contemptible and inconsiderable, it must be those who are in the lowest condition of debasement, bondmen and slaves : but every bondman as well as every freeman, shall be brought before this tribunal. And so likewise, Rev. xx. 12, 13. where all persons are distributed into two ranks, small and great. " I
" saw the dead, both small and great, standing be-
" fore God, and the books were opened, and the
" dead were judged out of the things which were
" written in those books ; and the sea gave up the
" dead which were in it, and death and the grave
" gave up the dead which were in them ; and they
" were judged every man according to their works." You see the whole world is ransacked and searched, sea and land, that none may escape this judgment. For which reason it seems to be called by the apostle St. Jude, ver. 6. " the judgment of the great day ;" for that will be a great day indeed, in which all men that ever lived in the world shall appear and receive their trial.

The sum of all is this, that all persons that ever were upon the face of the earth, none excepted, of what sex or age, of what rank or quality, of what country or nation, in what times or places soever they were born or lived ; high or low, rich or poor, knowing or ignorant, good or bad, young or old, the greatest princes and potentates, as well as the meanest subjects and slaves ; the deepest statesmen and politicians, the learned clerks and disputers of this world, as well as the idiots and the simple ; in short all, without any distinction or exception, without any privilege or respect of persons, shall at this great day appear before this high tribunal, and give an account
of

of themselves, and all their actions, and receive the proper doom and sentence respectively due to them.

I proceed to the

1st thing I proposed, which was to confirm this yet farther by arguments drawn from reason and scripture together. And this will appear, whether we consider the nature of man, or the nature of God. And,

1. If we consider the nature of man. We are all God's creatures, who have received all that we have from him, and depend wholly upon him, and are entirely subject to him, to be governed by such laws as he hath prescribed to us, and to be accountable to him for our observance or violation of them; all this is essentially included in the nature of a reasonable creature, and as such we all stand equally related to him. As we are creatures, we are not our own, but wholly another's, and perfectly at the disposal of him who made us, and from whom we received all that we have: and as we are reasonable creatures, we are all equally endowed with free choice and power over our actions; by the good or bad use whereof, we are capable of doing well or ill, and consequently of deserving well or ill for our doings, and of receiving rewards and punishments accordingly; we are all capable of being governed by laws, and therefore under the authority of God, as our lawgiver, and liable and accountable to him as our judge.

And all this is necessary and universal, because it is consequent upon the condition of our nature and being; and whoever pretends to be exempted from the judgment of God, he must exempt himself out of the creation of God, he must "deny the God that made him," and renounce his relation to him as a creature, must disclaim his dependance upon him, and subjection to him; he must withdraw himself from

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from the authority and jurisdiction of the universal King of the world, and declare that he hath nothing to do to rule over him, that he doth not stand obliged to him for his being, nor did receive from him those talents of life, and health, and reason, and other blessings which he enjoys, and consequently that he is not concerned to make any improvements of them, being accountable to none for the good or bad use of them.

Now if any man can think thus, that he is none of God's creatures and subjects, he may hope to decline and escape his judgments: but every man that owns God for his Creator and Sovereign, must yield himself to be subject to his laws, and liable to his judgment. Upon this account the apostle St. Paul concludes all the world, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, to be liable to the judgment of God; because they are all equally subject to his laws. Rom. iii. 19. "Now we know, says he, that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world," that is, both Jews and Gentiles, "may become guilty before God." In the Greek it is ὑπόδικος γίνονται τῷ Θεῷ, that "all the world may be subject" or liable "to the judgment of God." Now though this be immediately spoken of the Jews, who were under a written law; yet he had told us before, in what sense the Gentiles also, as well as the Jews, are under the law of God, chap. ii. 14. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law to themselves, shewing the work (or effect) of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing them witness, and their thoughts in the mean while accusing or else excusing one another." His meaning is, that there

is no person in the world, but, though he hath not the knowledge of divine revelation, and that law of God which is written in the scriptures, yet he hath the light of natural conscience, he hath a law which is born with him, enacted, as I may say, in his very nature, and written upon his heart ; which will acquaint him with the material parts and great lines of his duty ; and by virtue of this law he is obnoxious to the judgment of God, and stands accountable to him for all his breaches and violations of it. So that from the common nature of man, and that which is essential to all men, it is evident that we are all equally liable to the judgment of God.

2. If we consider the nature of God, who is impartially just and no acceptor of persons, this likewise will furnish us with an argument for the proof of this truth, that none shall be exempted from the judgment of God. Justice requires, that every one should have that which of due belongs to him ; but of due it belongs to every reasonable creature, to give an account of himself and of his actions to the great Judge of the world ; and to exempt any from this account, would be partiality, and that which the scripture calls *προσωπολήψια*, " respect or acceptation of persons," and which the scripture doth every where remove at the greatest distance from God. Deut. x. 17. " The LORD your GOD is LORD of lords, and GOD of gods, a great GOD, mighty and terrible, he regardeth not persons." 2 Chron. xix. 7. " There is no iniquity with the LORD your GOD, nor accepting of persons." Job xxxiv. 18, 19. speaking of the impartial justice of God, says he, " he accepteth not the persons of princes, nor accepteth the rich more than the poor : for they are all the work of his hands." 1 Pet. i. 17. " If we call

" on

“ on the Father, who without respect of persons
 judgeth every man.”

Now respect of persons is, in the distribution of justice, to have respect to some qualities and circumstances of persons, which do not at all appertain to the merits of the cause, and upon that account to deal unequally with those whose cases otherwise are equal. As when two persons are equally guilty, and obnoxious to the law, to bring one upon his trial and condemn him, but to exempt the other from justice; or if he come upon his trial, to absolve and acquit him upon some account of relation or interest or friendship, or because he is rich and powerful, the other mean and poor, or upon any other account besides the pure merits of the cause. Now the impartial and inflexible justice of the divine nature is such, that he is not to be moved and wrought upon by any consideration whatsoever, to exempt any person from appearing at his bar, and receiving his trial there, and having judgment past upon him, according as upon trial his cause shall appear to be. “ We must all
 “ appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST.” No person whatever, of what condition soever, shall be exempted from it.

All that now remains is to apply this to ourselves, and that in these following particulars.

I. From what has been said, we learn that this doctrine of a future judgment equally concerns every one of us, and ought in reason to have the like influence upon us, because we are all of us without difference or exception equally liable to the judgment of God; not one of us, of what age, or quality, or condition soever, shall be exempted from it. Whoever thou art, how great, or rich, or powerful soever, though never so big and considerable among men,

men, thou shalt not escape the judgment of God. It may be thou art a prince, and bearest rule over others : but thou also art liable to the judgment of God, and therefore oughtest to remember, that they that rule over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of God," and of that great account which they must one day give of that high charge committed to them. It may be now thou judgest others, and canst call them before thy bar, and make them tremble, having power and authority to absolve or condemn them : but remember, that for all this thou must come into judgment thyself, and give an account how thou hast judged others, and whether thou hast sat and proceeded in these inferior courts, as one mindful of the high tribunal of God, and with a just sense of the judgment of the great day, when all the causes which thou hast tried here upon earth, will be reviewed and severely scanned in that higher court, from which there can be no appeal.

It may be thou art rich and powerful, and one of those great flies that can break through the cobwebs of human laws, and escape the judgment of them : but the judgment of God will take fast hold of thee, and in despite of all thy interest, and might, will take a severe revenge upon thee. As powerful as thou art, thou art but a man, and God is infinitely too strong for thee, thou canst not escape out of his hands. "Thinkest thou, O man ! that thou shalt escape the judgment of God ?" says the apostle ; looking upon it as a foolish and absurd imagination, for any man to think, that he can by any means avoid the judgment of God.

So that so long as we are men, whatever else we are, we ought to stand in awe of the judgment of the great day ; because, let our rank and condition

be what it will, we are all equally obnoxious to that, and can upon no account whatsoever plead any privilege and exemption from it.

II. The consideration of this confounds all those differences and distinctions of men, which make such a noise in this world, and whatever they may signify in this world, makes them very inconsiderable as to the other. Why then should men be puffed up, and look so big upon account of any of these things, when there is a day not far off, and which will certainly, and for ought we know, shortly overtake us, which will level men in all these respects, and set them upon even ground, before an impartial bar; where none of these things will be had in any consideration, and where the foolish pride and arrogance of men shall be confounded, and those who were wont to look down with so much scorn upon others, as so infinitely below them, shall find themselves upon an equal level with the poorest and most abject part of mankind, and shall be ready to say with the wise man, in the wisdom of Solomon, chap. v. 8. "What hath pride profited us, or what hath riches with our vaunting brought us? All these things are passed away as a shadow, and as a post that hasteth by." So that we ought to use well all those advantages which we have above others in this world: if we do not, they will be of no use and benefit to us in the other. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath."

All these petty civil differences and discriminations of high and low, rich and poor, honourable and base, they only hold in this world, and are in vogue on this side the grave: but when we come into the other world, they will all cease and signify nothing. There the powerful oppressor can do nothing to the injury

injury of the poorest man that ever lived in this world, and as little to his own safety and security.

All that power and interest which is now so considerable, and makes it's way every where, and does what it pleaseth, will be of no use and significancy in the other world. The great and the mighty, when death hath once arrested them, and bound them over to the judgment of the great day, their glory and strength departs from them, and they are then but like other men. Job elegantly describes the state of men after death, Job iii. 17, 18, 19. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master." While we are upon the stage of this world, we sustain several persons; one is a prince and a great man, another is a captain and a mighty man; and whilst this life lasts, these differences are considerable: but when we retire and go off the stage, we shall then be undrest, we shall be strip'd of all our titles, and of all our glory, and go out of the world as naked as we came into it. Death and judgment level all mankind, and when we come to appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST, we shall all stand upon equal terms. For God respects not the persons of the mighty in judgment, he will shew no reverence to the great ones of this world, but will deal impartially and alike with all. Matth. xxv. 32. You may there see how the judge himself represents the universality and impartiality of his dealings with men in that day. "Before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." All man-

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kind shall then be gathered into one common flock, among which there shall no other distinction be made, but of sheep and goats ; the separation which shall then be made, shall not be of the high from the low, of the rich from the poor, of the honourable from the base, of the learned from the ignorant ; there shall be but one distinction then made, of the good from the bad, and the righteous from the wicked ; there shall no consideration be then had, but only of the moral differences of men ; all civil difference will then vanish and be of no account in that day, either to exempt any man from that judgment, or to gain any favour and respect to him in the hearing or decision of his cause. This should make all men very modest and humble in this world, to consider how they shall be levelled in the next.

III. How should the consideration of this dash all our sensual mirth and jollity, and put a damp upon our spirits, when they are too light and vainly transported with the pleasures and delights of this world ! If a man be to prepare himself to be tried for his life after a few days, how will he look about him, with what care and seriousness will he provide for so solemn an occasion, and neglect nothing that may stand him in stead, and help to bring him off when he shall receive his trial ! The thoughts of this will spoil all his mirth, and turn the lightness of his spirit into sober sadness. Much more ought the consideration of a judgment infinitely more terrible, and in the consequence of it of far greater concernment to us, to compose our minds into a serious frame. For if we believe a future and general judgment, and that none of us can by any means possibly escape it, then certainly it highly concerns every one of us to be serious, and to pass the time of his life in a perpetual

perpetual awe of it. So that St. Peter argues from S E R M. CLXXX. this consideration, 1 Pet. i. 17. "And if ye call
"on the Father, who without respect of persons
"judgeth every man, pass the time of your sojourn-
"ing here in fear." This thought should interpose
itself in all our mirth," that "we must appear be-
"fore the judgment-seat of CHRIST." And there-
fore Solomon admonisheth young men, in the midst
of their sports and pleasures, to think of a future
account, Eccles. xi. 9. "Rejoice, O young man,
"in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the
"days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy
"heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know
"that for all these things God will bring thee into
"judgment."

IV. And lastly, from hence we learn, that the
business of religion does equally concern every man.
For if we must all be judged, we are all concerned
to prepare and provide for it; and a religious and
virtuous life is the only preparation for it. How
should we order our lives with a respect to this great
and general assize, when every one of us shall be
brought upon his trial, and stand at the bar of God
to be judged by him? Many live as if they thought
the business of religion below them, and not at all
appertaining to them: but if the judgment of God
will equally reach all persons, then I am sure it e-
qually concerns all to mind religion, and a holy and
virtuous life; for that alone will make us worthy,
as our SAVIOUR himself expresseth it, "to escape
"all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand
"before the Son of man."

And this is the result of Solomon's enquiry, and
of his long discourse upon that argument, what is
the great work and business, the great interest and
con-

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concernment of men in this life ; which we find in the conclusion of his sermon, called the book of the preacher, Eccles. xii. 13, 14. “ Let us, says he, hear “ the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, “ and keep his commandments ; for this is the “ whole of man.” Religion is the great business and concernment of men in this world, because “ God will bring every man, and every work into “ judgment, whether it be good or evil.”

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2 COR. v. 10.

For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

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The fourth
sermon on
this text.

I Proceed to the third proposition contained in these words, viz. That all the actions which men have done in this life shall then come to account, and men shall be judged for them. “ That every man “ may receive the things done in the body, τὰ ἰδία “ τῷ σώματι, the things proper and due to the “ body ;” so some very good copies have it : and then the meaning will be, that every one may receive the reward due to him ; the word body, by a frequent Hebraism ; being put for the person ; as if he

he had said, "the reward due to himself," according to the actions he hath done in this life, good or bad : but in most copies it is, τὰ διὰ τῆ σῶμα, "the things done in, or by the body," as our translation renders it, that every one may receive the reward of the actions which he hath done in this life ; and then this phrase doth import what it is that shall be the matter of our account at the day of judgment, viz. "The things done in the body," that is, all the actions of this life, while we are in this world, in this state of union of the soul and body.

Whether there be any peculiar emphasis in this phrase, τὰ διὰ τῆ σῶμα, "the things done by, or in the body," as if it did exclude those things which shall be done after death, in the state of separation of our souls from our bodies, from being accounted for at the resurrection in the day of judgment ; I say, whether there be any such emphasis in those words, "the things done in the body," I cannot certainly affirm, though according to the nature and reason of the thing it seems very probable, as the schoolmen have generally determined in this case, that *meritum est viatoris*, "merit and demerit are proper to this state of trial ;" and that wicked men when they are in *termino*, and their state is finally concluded, and the trial of their obedience is at an end, do not demerit by their sins, nor increase their Punishment. For although that hatred and enmity of God which is in the damned spirits, be a monstrous irregularity in a creature, yet it cannot well in reason be otherwise, but that a creature which is extremely miserable, and withal desperate, and past all hopes of remedy and recovery out of that dismal state ; I say, it cannot well in reason be otherwise expected, but that a creature in such a condition should rage

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against the author of its torment and punishment, and do all the despite to him that he can, and wish that he were not, though it be in vain to wish so; and it seems probable that God will not bring this to a new account, because it seems so natural and necessary a consequent of a miserable and desperate state: but though all this be probable, I am far from being peremptory in it, much less am I confident that it is the meaning of this phrase here in the text, and I do not love to build an opinion upon a single and doubtful phrase of scripture. I only mention it by the by, not intending to insist upon it, being much of his mind, who said, *Non amo nimis argutam theologiam*, "I am no lover of great subtilty and nicety in divinity."

It is sufficient to my purpose, that this phrase of "every man's receiving the things done in the body," does at least import thus much, that we shall be accountable at the day of judgment, for all the actions that we have done in this life, and receive the due recompence and reward of them; which is the proposition I intend as briefly as I can to illustrate and confirm.

And, first, for the illustration of this point, I shall instance in the several heads of action, as they take their difference and variety from the principle, or matter, or object, or other circumstances of them. We must render an account to this great judge for our inward as well as outward actions; for the acts of our minds, and every thought springing up there, especially if it be cherished and entertained by us; for all our secret designs, purposes and intentions, as well as for the words which we speak, and the outward actions which we do: whatever we have thought and designed, spoken and declared, accomplished

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plished and done, will then be considered and examined, and we shall be judged for it. We must likewise give an account of all our civil as well as religious actions, of our behaviour toward men in all our dealing and intercourse with them, as well as of our demeanour toward G O D in the duties of his more immediate worship and service. The neglects and omissions of our duty in any kind will also come under consideration, as well as our commissions of evil. A strict account likewise will be exacted of all the talents which G O D hath entrusted us with, of all the abilities, opportunities and advantages we ever had of doing service to G O D, and good to men, and whether we have made answerable improvements of them, for the glory of G O D and the benefit and advantage of men.

We must be accountable likewise for words and actions of less moment and consequence, as well as for those of greater weight and concernment; for those which were done in secret, and in the greatest darkness and privacy, as well as for those which were done in publick, and in the open view and light of the world; for the good and evil which hath been done by ourselves, and in our own persons, and for what hath been done by others by our command and countenance, and from the influence of our counsel and persuasion, or example, or which we have been any ways necessary to hinder or promote; and lastly, for the manner and circumstances of our actions, as well as for the matter and substance of them; all these will be surveyed and strictly searched into, and weighed in an exact balance, that we may receive a reward or punishment proportionable to them.

Secondly, for the confirmation of this, I shall make it evident both from scripture and reason.

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I. From scripture ; which in general tells us, that
 “ God will bring every work into judgment ;” and
 that in order thereto, God strictly observes and takes
 notice of what we do ; that “ his eyes are upon the
 “ ways of man, and that he seeth all his goings ;
 “ that there is no darkness or shadow of death,
 “ where the workers of iniquity may hide them-
 “ selves,” Job xxxiv. 21, 22. That “ the ways
 “ of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he
 “ pondereth all his goings, Prov. v. 21. That
 “ he knoweth our paths, and our lying down, and
 “ is acquainted with all our ways.” That “ there
 “ is not a word in our tongue, but he knoweth it
 “ altogether, and that he understands even our
 “ thoughts afar off,” Psal. cxxxix. 2, 3, 4. That
 all the actions of men are recorded in books, which
 shall be “ produced and opened at the great day,
 “ and the dead, both small and great, shall be judged
 “ from those things, which shall be written in those
 “ books, Rev. xx. 12.”

And more particularly the scripture tells us, that
 those words and actions of men which seem most in-
 considerable, and are most likely to be exempted,
 shall be accounted for, and severely scanned and weigh-
 ed. Matt. xii. 36, 37. says our LORD there, “ I say
 “ unto you, that every idle word,” by which if our
 SAVIOUR do not mean every unprofitable, to be sure
 every “ wicked word that men shall speak, they shall
 “ give an account thereof in the day of judgment.
 “ For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by
 “ thy words thou shalt be condemned.” By which
 saying, our SAVIOUR designedly confutes an opinion
 too current among many, that mens words signify
 little, and that no account will be taken of them at
 the day of judgment ; that God will not be so severe

as to make them matter of charge and accusation, and to punish us for them in the other world ; and therefore to obviate this mistake, he purposely adds, “ for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by “ thy words thou shalt be condemned.” And therefore men must not think, that all their lewd and filthy talk, all their rash oaths and imprecations, all their atheistical discourse, and profane jests upon religion and the holy scriptures, all their calumnies and slanders of good men, all their officious lies to serve a present turn and occasion, will pass for nothing at the judgment of the great day. No, the judge himself hath expressly told us, that of all such “ words men “ shall give an account in the day of judgment.” And St. Jude tells us, out of an ancient prophecy of Enoch, that “ the LORD shall come with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, “ and to convince all that are ungodly, not only of “ all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly “ committed, but likewise of all their hard speeches “ which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

Our most secret thoughts and actions also, as well as our open and publick deeds, shall then be brought upon the stage, Eccles. xii. 14. “ For God will “ bring every work into judgment, with every secret “ thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Rom. ii. 16. “ In the day, when God shall judge “ the secrets of men by JESUS CHRIST, according to “ my gospel.” And this likewise is the meaning of that proverbial speech so often used by our SAVIOUR, “ there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed ; neither hid, that shall not be known.” There is nothing so secret which shall not be disclosed and made manifest in that great day of revelation, and be laid open in the face of the whole world ; especially

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cially the cunning, dissimulation and hypocrisy of men with GOD and men. Men are apt to think themselves safe enough, if they can but escape the eye of men, and commit their sins secretly, and in the dark. But this is either direct atheism, or downright folly; because the eye of GOD is continually upon us, and “the darkness hideth not from him, “but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and “the light are both alike to him.” And if we be always under the inspection of our judge, if all that we think, and say, and do, be “open and naked to “the eye of him, *πρὸς ὃν ἡμεῖν ὁ λόγος*, to whom we “must give an account,” what will it profit us to dissemble before men, and to conceal any of our actions from them? Nay, if we could hide them from ourselves (as we cannot our wilful and deliberate sins) yet that would be of no advantage to us, because GOD “is greater than our hearts, and knows all things.”

And then likewise, we must be accountable to GOD for all the neglects and omissions of our duty, as well as for the positive commission of sin, and that in proportion to the advantages and opportunities we have had of doing more and greater good. So our SAVIOUR tells us, that “unto whomsoever much is “given, of him much shall be required,” Luke xii. 48. Many are apt to think, that if they do but abstain from notorious and scandalous vices, if they do no body harm, though they do not serve GOD so fervently and constantly as others do, though they seldom think of him and pray to him, though they have no manner of activity or concernment to do good, either to the bodies or souls of men, yet that this negative virtue will serve their turn at the day of judgment. But the matter is quite otherwise, as our SAVIOUR hath most expressly declared. “A good
“tree,

“ tree, saith he, will bring forth good fruit.” And S E R M.
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by the parable of the foolish virgins, who for want of
“ oil in their lamps” were shut out of the kingdom
of God, he declares to us the dangerous state of
those who slumber away their lives in a drowsy inac-
tivity, and are not careful either to keep alive grace
in their hearts, or to shew forth the light of good
works in their conversation. And in the parable of
the talents, Matt. xxv. he passeth a most severe sen-
tence upon that “ slothful servant, who hid his lord’s
“ talent in a napkin, and buried it in the earth,”
without making any manner of improvement of it ;
ver. 30. “ Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer
“ darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of
“ teeth.” And in the same chapter, where our SA-
VIOUR represents to us the proceedings of the great
day, the charge there drawn up against them, consists
of sins of omission, and gross neglects to do the
good which they had the ability and opportunity to
do, ver. 41, 42, 43, &c. “ Depart from me, ye cursed,
“ into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his
“ angels. For I was hungry, and ye gave me no
“ meat ; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink ; a stran-
“ ger, and ye took me not in ; naked, and ye cloth-
“ ed me not ; sick and in prison, and ye visited me
“ not.” Not that sins of commission shall then be
past by and left out of the account ; it is taken for
granted, that they shall be reckoned for in the first
place : but the wisdom of our SAVIOUR chuseth to
instance in those sins, which many hope they shall not
be called to account for, the omissions and neglects
of their duty, that he might hereby root out of the
minds of men effectually that false opinion, which they
are so apt to entertain concerning such sins, as if they
were of a very light and venial nature.

II. This

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II. This is evident likewise from reason; because all the actions of reasonable creatures, as such, are under the regulation and government of law, by which, as by a rule, every thing that we do is to be measured. And we have all the reason that can be to expect, that he who gave us this law, will look to the observance of it, and take an account of all breaches and transgressions of it, so as to reward those that keep it, and to punish the bold transgressors of it; and if this were not so, the law would want it's proper sanction and enforcement, and had been given to no purpose.

And this law of God reacheth all our actions, inward and outward, religious and civil, secret and open, positive and negative, with all the circumstances of commendation or aggravation that belong to them. And as this law is the rule of all human actions now, and by which we ought to live in this world; so it will be the rule by which we and all our actions shall be examined and judged in the next. The judgment of God will be of the same extent with his law.

And thus I have, as briefly as I could, illustrated and confirmed the truth of this proposition, that all the actions which men have done in this life, shall come to account in the next, and they shall be judged for them.

And if so, then certainly no consideration that can be presented to the mind of man, ought in reason to be more powerful to beget in us a strict care and conscience of all our thoughts, words, and actions, than this, that after a little while, when a few days or years are over, all that we ever did in this world, shall be strictly examined and looked into, and be approved or condemned by the impartial judgment of God. And therefore, if we have any grain of true wisdom in us, any
love

love to ourselves, any sense of our great and everlasting interest, that great day of account should always be before us, and present to our minds, and we should govern every action of our lives with a serious and awful regard to it. And if we be conscious to ourselves that "there is any way of wickedness in us," that we have been grossly culpable in the violation of any known law of God, or in the neglect of any part of our duty, how can we without dread think of coming to so severe an account, and falling under so heavy a sentence, as will then be pronounced upon the workers of iniquity?

Indeed, if we could do any thing now, of which we were to give no account hereafter, and which would not be taken into consideration at the great day, we then might be secure and careless as to such actions: But when nothing we do is exempted from the judgment of God, when we are assured beyond all doubt, that he will one day take cognizance of every thought, word, and action; how circumspect should we be, "what manner of persons we are in "all holy conversation and godliness!" how nearly does it concern us, "to take heed to our ways, lest "at any time we offend: to keep our hearts with all "diligence, and to set a watch to the door of our "lips!" that we may not think or speak any thing in the sight or hearing of our judge, by which we may incur his censure and condemnation. This is the consideration which the wise man proposeth to us, as of all other the most likely to awe men to the careful obedience and observance of God's laws. "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for God "will bring every work into judgment, and every "secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be "evil."

Can

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Can we be negligent of our lives and actions, when we consider that all the passages of our lives are upon record, and that there is a most exact register kept of them, written in indelible characters with “a pen of iron, and the point of a diamond?” as the expression is, Jer xvii. 1. “I remember all their wickedness, and their doings are before me,” says God, Hof. vii. 2. And chap. viii. 7. “The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, surely I will not forget any of their works.” We sin, and forget that we have sinned: but God chargeth himself with the remembrance of all our evil doings, and they can never slip out of his mind.

Did men seriously believe these things, and were they affected with them as they ought, they could not but have a wonderful effect upon their lives, to make us more watchful over our ways, and to tread every step of our lives more warily. We could not “commit iniquity with so much greediness and pleasure, and rush into sin, as the horse rusheth into battel,” without any fear or consideration, were we verily persuaded, that every evil action that we do in this life, will be matter of charge and accusation in the day of judgment.

Therefore when we are doing any thing, we should ask ourselves, will not this also come into judgment? When we are engaged in any wicked design, or vicious course, we should consider, with what face will this act of violence and oppression, of fraud and cozenage, of filthy leudness and brutish intemperance, appear at the great day? how will it look, when “God shall arise to judgment?” When we are careless and remiss, slight and superficial in the service of God, and the duties of his worship, we should remember that God takes notice of all this, and we must

must give an account to him for the manner, as well as the matter of our actions.

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If the actions of our lives were transient, and the consequence of them were over so soon as they are done, and no memorial of them would remain hereafter; if they would die with us, and never rise up in judgment against us; we needed not to take such heed to them: But we do all things for eternity, and every action of this life will have a good or bad influence upon our everlasting state.

More particularly, the consideration of this should have an influence upon us, more especially to these purposes.

1. To make us afraid of lesser sins, as well as greater, because those also, as well as these, will come into judgment; and we should not esteem any thing little, which God shall think fit to take into consideration, and to bring upon the stage at the great day.

2. The consideration of this should likewise deter us from secret sins. We are apt to think, that if we can but sin in secret, and hide what we do from the eyes of men, we are secure and safe enough: but alas! our great danger is not from men, but God; not now, but hereafter. We are now very solicitous to conceal our wickedness, that we may avoid shame, and escape punishment from men: but God will one day produce all our secret sins, and bring them forth into the light, for all our studious concealment of them now. Now we are afraid of the eye of men, and therefore chuse secrecy, that we may commit our sins privately and unseen. Vain man! The day is at hand, when all thy secret leudness and fraud will be brought upon the publick stage of the world, and be matter of publick infamy to thee, and an everlasting reproach that can never be wiped off; and though

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thou now “ coverest thy transgression as Adam, “ and hidest thine iniquity in thy bosom,” yet the time is coming, when all thy secret wickedness shall be exposed to the view of angels and men ; and then, sinner, what wilt thou do, when thou shalt appear before this all-seeing Judge? None of thine arts of concealment will then stand thee in stead. Canst thou hide thy sins from his eye, so that he cannot search them out? or thy self from his wrath? If thou canst not, what matters it to have any secret from others when all is known to thy Judge?

3. This should likewise dispose us to great sincerity in all our words and actions, and make us always to speak as we think, to perform what we promise and profess, and in all things to be what we would seem to be, since there is a day coming when “ the “ secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed,” and every mask of hypocrisy and dissimulation shall be pluck’d off, and our most close and cunning designs shall be brought into the open light. In that great day of revelation, nothing will be matter of comfort and rejoicing to us, but “ the testimony of our consciences, “ that in all simplicity and godly sincerity, we have “ had our conversation in the world.”

4. This should make us faithfully to improve all the talents and opportunities which God affords to us, because we are but stewards, and must give an account of them. We are apt to covet great wealth, and to aspire after great places and power : but do we consider what it is that we so eagerly desire and pursue? All this will but bring upon us the burden of a greater and heavier account, if we do not improve these talents and advantages to the end for which they were given, to relieve the wants of the poor and miserable, and to serve the great ends of religion and
virtue ;

virtue ; and if we fail herein, a dreadful account will be exacted of us, and we shall wish that we had been the poorest and meanest, the most ignorant and unlearned persons in the world.

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5. This should restrain us from uncharitable censures of others. "Thou art therefore inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest another : for thinkest thou, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" as the apostle reasons, Rom. ii. 1.

6. This may help to support us under the unjust censures and reproaches of men. If we be innocent, God will one day "bring forth our righteousness as the light, and our judgment as the noon-day." "With me, saith St. Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 3. it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment. He that judgeth me is the LORD." It is desirable to approve ourselves and our actions to men : but if we cannot, it is a great satisfaction to approve them to our own consciences, and to God who is "greater than our hearts, and knows all things."

Lastly, This will teach us not to measure our condition by the good opinion which others have of us ; but by the law of God, which will be the standard and measure of our judgment. He will consider every thing exactly, and weigh all the circumstances of our case, and make all the allowances that equity requires. Men can but judge according to appearance ; but the judgment of God will be according to truth : therefore we should above all "labour to be accepted of him in that day."

S E R M O N CLXXXII.

Of the sentence to be passed at the day
of judgment.

2 C O R. v. 10.

*For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of
CHRIST, that every one may receive the things
done in his body, according to that he hath done,
whether it be good or bad.*

S E R M.
CLXXXII.

The fifth
sermon on
this text.

I Proceed to the fourth and last proposition contained in the text, viz. that at the day of judgment, sentence shall be passed upon men according to the nature and quality of their actions done in this world, whether good or evil. The reward of happiness or misery which men shall be sentenced to at that day, shall bear a proportion to the good or evil which they have done in this life.

In the prosecution of this argument, I shall enquire into these two things.

First, What proportion the rewards of the next world shall bear to the actions of men in this life.

Secondly, The grounds and reasons of it. And then make some application of this truth to the consciences of men.

First, What proportion the rewards of the next world shall bear to the actions of men in this life. I mean, whether the rewards of the next life shall only be proportioned to the kind and quality of our actions considered in general, as good or evil, that is, that good men shall be rewarded with everlasting glory

glory and happiness, and wicked men with eternal punishment and torment: or whether the degrees of these rewards shall likewise bear a proportion to the degrees of the good or evil of our actions, so that a more eminent degree of piety and holiness, shall have a proportionable share of glory and happiness; and greater and more heinous sins, shall be loaded with greater and heavier punishments.

I. It is clear, and out of all controversy, that men shall be rewarded according to the quality and kind of their actions; good shall be rewarded to the good, and evil to the evil. And this is the constant tenor of the bible. Psal. i. 6. "The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous," that is, doth approve it, and will reward it: "but the way of the ungodly shall perish;" which is of the same importance with the expression in the verse before, "the wicked shall not stand in the judgment." Isa. iii. 10, 11. "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with them, for they shall eat of the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked, for it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him;" which if it be meant of the rewards and punishments of this life, is much more constantly and universally true of the other. Matt. xvi. 27. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels with him, and shall reward every man according to his works." Rev. xxii. 12. "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every man according as his work shall be," that is, whether good or evil. Rom. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life, that is, to those who have their fruit unto holiness," as he had said immediately before. Hither likewise belong those innumerable texts, in which

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which glory and happiness and eternal life are promised to those who live “soberly, righteously, and
 “godly in this present world;” and wickedness and disobedience are threatened with dreadful and eternal punishment. But I shall only take notice of two or three of the most remarkable of them. Matt. xiii. 40, 41, 42. “The Son of man shall send forth his angels
 “and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things
 “that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall
 “cast them into a furnace of fire, there shall be
 “wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the
 “righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of
 “their Father.” But this is most fully represented in that particular description, which our LORD himself makes of the process of that day, Matt. xxv. 34. where the sentence that shall be past on the righteous is this, “Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the
 “kingdom prepared for you before the foundation
 “of the world.” And on the wicked, ver. 41. “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,
 “prepared for the devil and his angels.” And ver. 46. “And these, speaking of the wicked, shall
 “go away into everlasting punishment: but the
 “righteous into life eternal.” John v. 28, 29. “The hour is coming in which all that are in their
 “graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth,
 “they that have done good unto the resurrection of
 “life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.” Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9. speaking of “the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who, says the apostle, shall render
 “to every man according to his works; to them
 “who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for
 “glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:
 “but to them that are contentious and obey not the
 “truth,

“ truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and
“ wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul
“ of man that doth evil.”

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II. That the rewards and recompences of the next world shall likewise bear a proportion to the degrees of good or evil which we have done in this life, though it have been controverted, seems also to be sufficiently clear from scripture. And to this purpose I shall,

1. Produce such texts as will fully prove it. And,
2. Answer the grounds of the contrary opinion.

1. The scripture doth plainly assert, that the rewards of the next life will bear a proportion, not only to the kind and quality of our actions, but to the degree of them; that good men shall receive a reward proportionable to the degree of their holiness and obedience, of their service and sufferings for God: and that the torments of the wicked shall be greater or less, according to the degree and aggravation of their sins.

(1.) As for good men; that the reward, that shall be bestowed upon them, shall bear a proportion to the degree of their service and sufferings for God. This seems to be intimated in those metaphorical expressions used by the prophet Daniel, chap. xii. 3. “ They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the
“ firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.” Which is much the same with what St. Paul expressly affirms, concerning the different glory of the saints at the resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 41. “ There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the
“ stars: for one star differeth from another star in
“ glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead.” Matt. v. 10, 11. “ Blessed are ye, when men shall
“ revile

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“ revile you, and persecute you, and speak all manner of evil against you for my name’s sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad : for great is your reward in heaven.” Which words, if they do not signify a more glorious reward to those who suffer persecution for CHRIST, have no emphasis or encouragement in them. For what cause of “ exceeding joy and gladness” is it, to be persecuted and suffer for CHRIST, if a peculiar reward did not belong to those who suffer for him? If there do not, then those who suffer for CHRIST, are plainly in a worse condition in this world, than other good men who escape these sufferings ; and yet are in no better condition, than others in the next world : and then why should any man be glad to suffer? Matt. x. 41, 42. “ He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet’s reward : and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man’s reward.” Where you see a difference intimated between “ the reward of a prophet, and a righteous man,” namely, that a prophet shall have a greater reward than an ordinary good man. Matt. xix. 28, 29. where our blessed SAVIOUR tells us, that all that denied themselves for CHRIST, “ shall inherit everlasting life ;” but for his disciples, who were continually attendants upon him, and sufferers for him, that a more eminent degree of glory should be conferred on them ; which is express’d by their “ sitting upon twelve thrones, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel.” But most plainly in the parable of the talents, where every man’s reward is according to the improvement of his talents. “ He that had gained five talents, is made ruler over five cities ; and he that had gained ten talents, ruler over ten cities,”

Luke xix. 15. 1 Cor. xv. 58. " Be ye stedfast, un-
" moveable, always abounding in the work of the
" LORD ; forasmuch as you know that your labour
" is not in vain in the LORD." But if our reward
should not hold a proportion to the degree of our
service, it would be in vain to be " abundant in the
" work of the LORD." 2 Cor. iv. 17. " Our light
" affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for
" us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glo-
" ry ;" that is, our affliction contributes to our glo-
ry, and adds to the degree of it. 2 Cor. ix. 6. The
apostle useth this as an argument to persuade the Co-
rinthians to be very liberal and bountiful to their dis-
tressed brethren, because according to the degree of
their charity, would be the degree of their reward.
" This I say, he that soweth sparingly, shall reap
" sparingly, and he that soweth plentifully, shall reap
" plentifully:" than which I cannot imagine any
thing can be spoken more plainly to this purpose.
And the same argument he useth to the Philippians,
to stir them up to charity, Phil. iv. 17. " Not be-
" cause I desire a gift : but I desire fruit that may
" abound to your account ;" clearly implying, that
the more good we do in this world, the more abun-
dant shall be our reward in the next.

(2.) It is likewise as plain from scripture, that the
punishment and torment of wicked men will be abat-
ed or increased proportionably to the degree and ag-
gravation of their sins. Upon this account our SA-
VIOUR threatens those who continue impenitent un-
der the gospel, with more heavy and dreadful punish-
ments, and tells us, that " in the day of judgment"
their condition shall be far worse than theirs of " Tyre
" and Sidon, of Sodom and Gomorrah," Matt. xi.
20, 21. And Matt. xxiv. 51. he threatens that ser-

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vant, who, because "his LORD delayed his coming," presumed so much upon the patience of GOD, with a more severe punishment: "The LORD of that servant shall cut him in sunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites;" intimating that the punishment of hypocrites will be very severe, and as it were the standard of the highest punishment. And so likewise, Luke xii. 47, 48. our SAVIOUR tells us, that according to the degree of light and knowledge which men sin against, shall be the degree of their torment. "The servant that knew his LORD's will, and prepared not himself to do according to it, shall be beaten with many stripes: but he that knew it not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." And in general he tells us, that the punishment of sinners takes it's aggravation from the advantages and opportunities which men have neglected. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required, and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." So likewise the apostle to the Hebrews tells us, that GOD will vindicate the contempt of the gospel more severely than of the law of Moses, Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4. "If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" And chap. x. 28, 29. "He that despised Moses's law died without mercy, under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?"

So that it seems very evident from scripture, that the degree of happiness or misery which men shall be sentenced to in the next world, shall be correspond-

dent

dent to the degree of good or evil, which they have done in this world; and I can hardly imagine any thing more clear. But it seems the schoolmen, and other divines who have been at leisure to tie knots, and to make objections against the plainest truths, have called this also into question. And therefore I shall, in the

IId. Place, briefly examine the grounds of the contrary opinion; which though they do but immediately strike at the degrees of glory and happiness, yet by a parity of reason and consequence, they likewise overthrow the degrees of punishment; and they are these two.

I. They say, that the merits of CHRIST, by which eternal life and happiness is purchased for us, are equal to all those who have any interest in them, and are of value sufficient to purchase the highest degree of glory for them; and the meritorious cause being the same, there is no reason to imagine any difference of degrees in the effect.

Answ. The weakness of this objection, how specious soever it may appear, will be evident to any one that considers, that eternal life and happiness doth not accrue to us by way of necessary and natural result from the merit of CHRIST's obedience and sufferings, but of voluntary compact and agreement, and therefore is only available so far as it pleased God the Father and him that it should be. Now the scripture hath declared that "CHRIST is the author of eternal salvation to them that believe and obey him:" but it hath declared likewise, that according to the degrees of our holiness and obedience shall be the degrees of our happiness; because the happiness which CHRIST hath purchased for us, is not bestowed upon us but upon certain terms and

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conditions to be performed on our part, upon the performance whereof, and the degrees of that performance, the degrees of our happiness do depend.

II. The other objection is from the parable of the labourers in the vineyard, Matth. xx. where it is said, that "they that came in at the last hour received as much, as they that came in at the first, and had borne the heat and burden of the day, every one his penny." For answer to this, It is a known rule among divines, that *theologia parabolica non est argumentativa*; by which they mean, that we cannot argue in divinity from every circumstance of a parable, but only from the main scope of it. Now this parable seems plainly directed against the envious Jews, who murmured because the Gentiles were to partake of the blessing of the Messias, and that they who were called in the last age of the world should share in this benefit, as well as the ancient people of God; so that by the murmurers, the Jews are designed, who were offended that salvation should come to the Gentiles. And then the scope of the parable is not, that all good men shall have equal degrees of glory; but that the Gentiles, which were called long after the Jews, should be saved as well as they. I proceed to the

Second thing I proposed to enquire into, viz. the grounds and reasons of this, why the rewards which shall be distributed at the day of judgment, shall bear a proportion to the good or evil which men have done in this life? And,

I. That they shall be correspondent to the nature and quality of our actions, the justice and equity of the divine providence doth plainly require. For justice is to give to every one that which of due belongs to him: now of equity it belongs to them that
do

do well, that it should go well with them; and to the evil, that it should be ill with them, that every one should "receive the fruit of his doings." Not that we can strictly merit any thing at the hand of God. It is goodness to reward an innocent creature, and it is goodness to reward the good actions of those who have been sinners; but justice requires that good and bad men should not fare alike. Thus Abraham reasons from the justice of God, "that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: shall not the judge of all the world do right?" And considering the promises which the goodness of God hath made freely to good men, for their encouragement in goodness, and the performance of these promises is founded in the righteousness and faithfulness of God.

2. That the rewards of the next life should bear a proportion to the degree of the good or evil done by us in this life, is clearly founded in the equity and reasonableness of the thing; it being very much for the encouragement of holiness and goodness, to be assured that whatever we do for God now, will be fully considered and rewarded hereafter; that he will take notice of the least service that we do for him, and that every degree of grace and holiness shall be crowned with an answerable degree of glory, and happiness. And so on the other hand, it tends very much to discountenance sin, and to keep men from running to the height of impiety; to consider that every sin will aggravate their misery, and that every degree of wickedness will add to the weight of their torment, and that though they be "children of wrath" already, yet by "adding iniquity to transgression," they may cause the "wrath of God and his jealousy to smoke against them," and bring
more

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more curses upon themselves, and make themselves
 “ ten times more the children of wrath.”

And indeed in the nature of the thing it cannot be otherwise, but that the better and more holy any man is, the more capable he should be of happiness, and the more disposed for the enjoyment of God; and the more wicked any man is, the more he should exasperate his own conscience, and awaken those furies which rage in his breast. “ He treasures up “ more wrath against the day of wrath,” and piles up more fuel for everlasting burnings. The torments of hell are in scripture compared to fire; now the more fuel and greater store of combustible matter is cast into it, the more fierce and raging it must be.

I have done with the explication, and shall now apply what hath been delivered.

I. If sentence shall be past at the great day according to the good or bad actions of men, this shews us what should be the great care of every man in this life; to attend to the nature and quality of our actions, and to observe that difference between them in our practice now, which our judge will certainly make in the sentence which he will pass upon them at the great day. And yet so blind and mistaken is the greatest part of the world, that they make this the least part of their care and business. Men are generally very solicitous to be rich and great, and to be in a healthful and prosperous condition, and do with all possible care seek to avoid sickness and poverty and meanness: but how few are concerned to be virtuous and good, and to avoid wickedness and vice! And yet these moral differences of men at the day of judgment will only be taken into consideration: other things will not “ profit us in the day of
 “ wrath.”

“wrath.” GOD in that day will not proceed with men according to their outward quality and condition in this life, their eternal state shall not then be decided according to their wealth or poverty, their height and meanness in this world : it will not then be enquired what office a man bore, what titles of honour, what manors or lordships he was owner of; but how he hath behaved himself in those circumstances, what use he hath made of his wealth and power, what good or evil he hath done ; whether he hath glorified GOD, and served the great ends of his creation ; whether he hath obeyed or disobeyed the truth ; whether he hath lived in “ungodliness” and worldly lusts, or soberly and righteously and “godly in this present world ;” in a word, whether we have been righteous or wicked. This will be the great enquiry at that day, and these qualities, according as they are found with us, will determine our condition for ever.

II. The consideration of this may comfort good men under the promiscuous dispensations of GOD’s providence in this world. Now “all things generally happen alike, and there is the same event to the righteous and to the wicked :” but things will not be always thus. Have but a little patience, and the justice of GOD’s providence, which is now under a cloud, will clear up ; the day is coming which will make a wide and vast difference between good and bad men, “between those that serve GOD, and those that serve him not ; those that swear, and those that fear an oath ;” between the lewd and the chaste, the sober and debauched, the meek of the earth and the murderers ; between the proud and the humble, the just and the oppressors ; between those that persecute, and those who are persecuted for righteousness.

Now

Now the difference is frequently on the wrong side ; good men suffer and are afflicted, the wicked flourish and are prosperous : but “ go into the sanctuary of God, and there thou shalt see their end.” Let us but look a little before us, beyond the things which are seen and are but temporal, unto the things which are not seen and are eternal,” and we shall see all things straight ; that the end of the wicked,” who flourished in this world, “ is to be destroyed for ever ; and that the righteous,” who were so distressed and afflicted in this world, “ shall enter into rest and joy : when the days of refreshing shall come from the presence of the LORD, these shall be comforted and the other tormented.”

III. If the reward of the next life shall bear a proportion to the degrees of good or evil which we have done in this world, then on the one hand here is matter of great comfort and encouragement to us in the ways of holiness and obedience. This is a mighty argument to good men to grow in grace, and to press forward toward perfection, “ to be steadfast and unmoveable and abundant in the work of the LORD, because they know that their labour shall not be in vain in the LORD ;” but that according to the degrees of our service and obedience, of our virtue and goodness, shall be the degree of our glory and happiness. We serve a good master, who will consider every thing that we do for him ; “ who is not unrighteous, to forget our work and labour of love,” and will not let the least service pass unrewarded. Let us not then content ourselves with any low degree of goodness ; but be continually aspiring after the highest perfection we are capable of. Since we have such a prize in our view,

“let us run with patience,” and with all our might, “the race which is set before us.” For by the same reason that any man desires happiness, he cannot but desire the highest degrees of it that are attainable; and will consequently endeavour to make himself capable of the greatest degree of glory: and though no degree of holiness can merit everlasting life and happiness, yet greater degrees of holiness will certainly be rewarded with a larger portion of happiness. God is not bound antecedently to his promise, to give so great a reward to any man for his works; yet he hath promised to reward every man according to them.

So that there is no reason why a good man, when he is once come to this, that by the grace and assistance of GOD, he can refrain from gross sins, and resist the temptations to them, and perform the great duties of religion, why he should with Esau, sit down and say, “I have enough,” I have so much as will carry me to heaven, and I desire no more. It is a sad presage of apostasy, to stand still in religion. He that once stops, the next thing is to look back. This is the remedy which St. Peter prescribes against apostasy, 2 Pet. iii. 18. “Take heed lest ye fall from your own steadfastness;” and then it follows, “but grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.” The best remedy against apostasy, is growth in goodness. It is a rule in policy, that an ambitious man should never stay at any step of preferment, till he come at the top, because it is some security to be in motion. Our ascent to heaven is steep and narrow, and we are safest when we do not stand still: temptation cannot so well take it’s aim at us.

Let us therefore press after the highest degree of

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virtue and holiness, and labour to be as good as we can in this world, that in the next our happiness may be the greater ; that when the day of recompence shall come, we may receive an ample reward, and God the righteous judge may set a bright and glorious crown upon our heads.

We ought likewise to consider, that if any man can be content only to be saved, and desire no more but just to get heaven, that such a degree of holiness and virtue as will save a man that can attain no more, will perhaps not save that man who lazily rests in the lowest degree, and desires no more. To be “ least “ in the kingdom of God,” is next to being shut out of it. It is not to be expected that God should bestow heaven and happiness upon those who are so indifferent about it, as to desire heaven for no other reason, but because they would not go to hell. Men must not think to drive so near and hard a bargain, in so desirable and advantageous a purchase.

And then on the other hand, it is matter of great terror to great sinners. “ The wages of every sin “ is death,” eternal death ; and every degree of hell and damnation is dreadful : but there are sins more heinous in themselves, and some that are attended with heavier aggravations in some persons ; these do inflame hell, and heat that furnace seven times hotter. There are some moderate sinners in comparison ; these shall have a moderate doom, and a cooler hell : but there are others, who are extravagant and enormous sinners, that “ drink up iniquity, as “ the ox drinks up water ; that let themselves loose “ to commit all wickedness with greediness ;” such as sin above the common rate of men, with full consent, and upon deliberation, with great design and contrivance, in despite of the clearest convictions,
of

of the best counsels and reproofs; these make haste to ruin, and take hell by violence. Now such "mighty transgressors shall be mightily tormented;" they shall not be punished at the common rate of sinners, their consciences will breed more and sharper stings, and wilder furies to torment them, and they shall sink into a deeper misery.

More particularly this concerns us Christians, who continue impenitent, and live in our sins, notwithstanding the clear revelation of the gospel, and "the wrath of God revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; notwithstanding life and immortality so clearly brought to light by the gospel. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" What condemnation will be heavy enough for those, who wilfully refuse to be saved? This is the condemnation, says our SAVIOUR, "that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light." All the sins which we now commit, are infinitely aggravated above the sins of thousands in the world, who never enjoyed that light, and those advantages and opportunities which we have done. "The ignorance of these God winked at, but now he expects, he commands all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in which he will judge the world in righteousness." What stripes do we deserve, who have "known our master's will, but have not prepared ourselves to do according to it?" All that light and knowledge which we have, all those counsels and instructions which we have read and heard out of God's word, will inflame our account, and heighten our condemnation, and the very means of our salvation will be the saddest aggravation of our ruin. What our SAVI-

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OUR said of the impenitent and unbelieving Jews, holds as well concerning impenitent Christians ; that
 “ it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, for
 “ Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment,
 “ than for them. But, beloved, I hope better things
 “ of you, and things that accompany salvation.”
 Let us but remember and seriously consider, that
 “ we must all appear before the judgment-seat of
 “ CHRIST, to receive the things done in the body,
 “ according to what we have done, whether good
 “ or evil ;” and this will certainly have a mighty
 awe and influence upon our lives, and all the ac-
 tions of them.

“ Now the God of peace, &c.”



The END of the NINTH VOLUME.

T H E C O N T E N T S.

S E R M. CLVII.

God the first cause, and last end.

R O M. xi. 36.

***F**OR of him, and through him, and to him are
all things, to whom be glory for ever, Amen.*
Page 3761.

S E R M. CLVIII.

Of doing good.

Being a spital sermon preach'd at *Christ-Church* on *Easter-Tuesday*,
April 14. 1691.

*Let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season
we shall reap, if we faint not: as we have there-
fore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, espe-
cially unto them who are of the household of faith,*
P. 3776.

S E R M. CLIX.

The necessity of repentance and faith.

A C T S xx. 21.

*Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, re-
pentance toward GOD, and faith toward our LORD
JESUS CHRIST.*
P. 3797.

S E R M. CLX.

Of confessing and forsaking sin, in order to pardon.

Preached on *Ash-Wednesday*.

P R O V.

PROV. xxviii. 13.

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whose confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy,

P. 3814.

SERM. CLXI.

Of confession and sorrow for sin.

PSAL. xxxviii. 18.

I will declare mine iniquity, and be sorry for my sin,

P. 3837.

SERM. CLXII

The unprofitableness of sin in this life, an argument for repentance.

Preached on Ash-Wednesday, 1689.

JOB xxxiii. 27, 28.

He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profit-ed me not; he will deliver his soul from going in-to the pit, and his life shall see the light. P. 3854.

SERM. CLXIII, CLXIV, CLXV, CXLVI.

The shamefulnes of sin, an argument for repentance.

The final issue of sin, an argument for repentance.

The present and future advantage of an holy and virtuous life.

ROM. vi. 21, 22.

What fruit had ye then in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, P. 3875,

3892, 3905, 3929.

SERM.

The CONTENTS.

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S E R M. CXLVII, CXLVIII, CXLIX.

The nature and necessity of holy resolution.

J O B xxxiv. 31, 32.

Surely it is meet to be said unto GOD, I have born chastisement, I will not offend any more : That which I see not, teach thou me ; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

3949, 3964, 3980.

S E R M. CLXX, CLXXI.

The nature and necessity of restitution.

L U K E xix. 8, 9.

And if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And JESUS said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house.

3996, 4013.

S E R M. CLXXII.

The usefulness of consideration, in order to repentance.

D E U T. xxxii. 29.

O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end !

4034.

S E R M. CLXXIII.

The danger of impenitence, where the gospel is preached.

M A T T. xi. 21, 22.

Woe unto thee Chorazin, woe unto thee Bethsaida ! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.

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S E R M. CLXXIV, CLXXV, CLXXVI,
CLXXVII.

Of the immortality of the soul, as discovered by nature, and by revelation.

2 T I M. i. 10.

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light, through the gospel. 4067, 4087, 4109, 4122.

S E R M. CLXXVIII, CLXXIX, CLXXX.
CLXXXI, CLXXXII.

Of the certainty of a future judgment. Of the person by whom the world shall be judged. Of the persons who are to be judged. Of the actions for which men will be accountable. Of the sentence to be passed at the day of judgment.

2 C O R. v. 10.

For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of CHRIST, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. 4144, 4159, 4175, 4188, 4202.



